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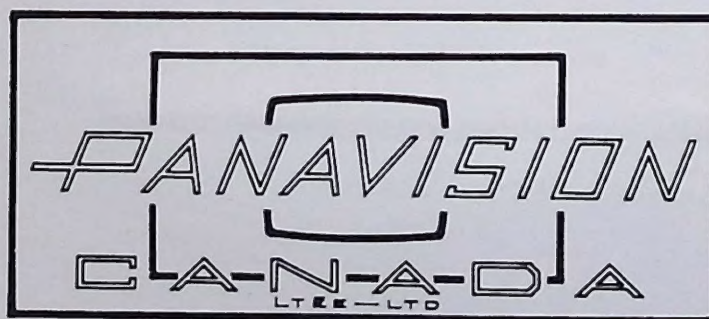
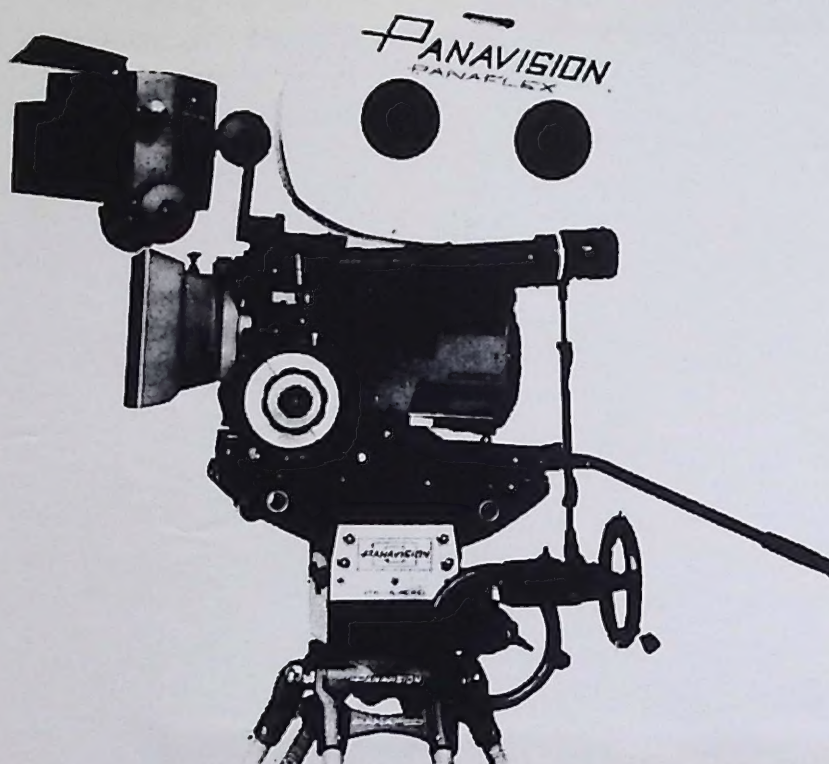
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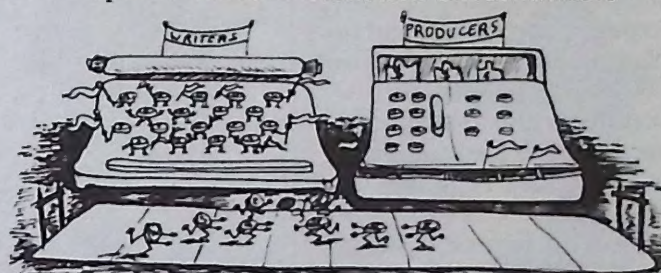
At the ring toss championship, Anne Létourneau is the apple of her escort's eye. Unfortunately for Gabriel Arcand, her interest lies elsewhere. For more on *Lels Plouffe*, see p. 2.

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IN PROGRESS...

If you don't know by now that there is a five million dollar feature being shot of Roger Lemelin's novel, **Les Plouffe**, then you must live under a rock. From Saskatoon to Sault Ste. Marie to Charlottetown, journalists have been beefing up their expense accounts to get to Montreal and catch a glimpse of what they are sure is history in the making. Director, Gilles Carle, appears to agree: **Les Plouffe** is to Quebec what **Les Misérables** is to France or what **Gone With The Wind** is to the United States."

But for people who take film seriously, there is reason to believe that **Les Plouffe** may turn out to be to Quebec what Von Stroheim's **Greed** was to America or Bertolucci's **1900** was to Italy. Mr. Carle says he's making a four-and-a-half hour feature film — that's it and that's all. "They may decide to show it in two parts or with an intermission, but I don't think people will be at all bored by seeing this film in one sitting." On the other side of town, however, Denis Héroux (executive producer, along with John Kemeny), is telling anyone and everyone that he's overseeing production of a two-hour feature film and a five-hour television mini-series that are being shot simultaneously. A case of who has the final cut? The financing for the film includes a reported million dollars from Radio-Canada (the CBC is said to be considering the purchase of a dubbed version that Carle may or may not supervise) and that tends to tip the scales even more towards Héroux's vision.



Les Plouffe

The interest generated by this project is due, of course, to the memory of **La famille Plouffe**, a half-hour situation comedy that began on Radio-Canada in 1953 before being televised in English as well in 1954. The series continued to enjoy its unique success on both networks until 1959 when it was dropped. But those who are awaiting a re-run of the

Gathered around the patriarch, Emile Genest, are Juliette Huot, Gabriel Arcand, Denise Filiatrault, Serge Dupire and Pierre Curzi: **Les Plouffe**

television series are in for a surprise. "Hopefully people will be disappointed at the beginning of the film but happy at the end," says Carle who is credited with co-authorship of the script along with Lemelin. "The TV series was okay — sort of the Archie Bunker of its day — but a little too cute. In the film, we are taking "les Plouffe" out of the kitchen and into the streets."

Although the setting of the novel is Quebec City's Lower Town, only two weeks of the thirteen-week shooting schedule were spent there — shooting exteriors that will open and close the film, and a religious procession that involved 1,500 extras. In Montreal, they have literally taken over approximately one city block in another kind of lower town, Pointe St-Charles — which, ironically, has come to be known as roughly the Anglophone version of Plouffe-land

through the plays of David Fennario. Where there once was an empty lot, there is now the maison Plouffe, outside balcony and all. On the street in front of the house they've laid tramway tracks, and the familiar noises of the tram are used as background effects through most of the shooting — except, of course, when Onésime, the tram conductor, drops in to visit.

The plot of the film is taken directly from the novel with only minimal changes. Essentially it concentrates on the members of one family as they go about trying to live their lives with dignity during a period of history when such aspirations were difficult to realize. "The Plouffe family is a

wonder of the daily life of an entire people as seen through the eyes of a family," Carle says. "They are screaming to live and are betrayed by everyone. I am one of the Plouffes. I was born into it and I lived it. I have a right to do anything I want in this film except step outside and look down on these people. This is me."

The issues the family confronts are those that one would expect in an epic: sex, religion, nationalism, war, conscription, royalty, les Anglais — even baseball. It is the first time Carle, a veteran of fifteen features, has worked from a novel, and he says he wouldn't do it again unless he had the help of the author. Lemelin, presently publisher of *La Presse* and a man notorious for his strongly held individualist's views, was sometimes surprised to find what he had written in 1948. "Whenever we had an argument," says Carle, "I would say, 'Roger, let's go back to the book. But he was always willing to start over again and write anything. He has a wonderful memory of this era.'"

Included in the cast is Émile Genest, who played the role of Napoleon in the TV series and is now cast as Papa, Théophile Plouffe. Juliette Huot, Denise Filiatrault, Gabriel Arcand, Pierre Curzi and Serge Dupire make up the rest of the family and are joined by two French actors, Stéphane Audran and Rémi Laurent. The crew is basically the same one Carle had for *Fantastica* (which is scheduled to open in Montreal at the beginning of November... *enfin*), including director of photography, François Protat. The only new-comer is an Englishman, William McCrow, who is the production designer; seemingly an odd choice for such a film, but Carle says, "On the contrary. He knew exactly what kind of chairs and curtains the Plouffe kitchen had to have from reading the book. Many of the actors don't even remember the TV series but they know exactly what to do — it's in them. This is their culture. I don't have to direct this, I'm really the film's first viewer — I stand back and watch." But will all this watching still produce a Gilles Carle film? "I hope so. But then again, I hope not."

Listening to Carle as he speaks, it is hard not to get caught up in his enthusiasm for this lengthy film and the sincerity and humility he brings to it. The question is, will the powers that be at ICC feel the same? Will the public, in fact, be treated to a four-hour epic, or some other variation on the theme?

Kevin Tierney

Les Plouffe

p.c. I.C.C. - Cine London 1980 **exec. p.** Denis Héroux, John Kemeny **p.** Justine Héroux **d.** Gilles Carle **sc.** Roger Lemelin, Gilles Carle from novel by Roger Lemelin **p. man.** Micheline Garant **p. sec.** Jacky Fritz **d.o.p.** François Protat **p. design.** William McCrow, François Lamontagne (1st asst.) **set dress.** Réal Ouellette, Daniel Larose (asst.) **dressers** Renée April, France Gilbert **ed.** Yves Langlois, Jean-Guy Montpetit, Jocelyn Genest (asst.) **mus.** Stéphane Venne **sd.** Patrick Rousseau **boom** Thierry Hoffman **cost. design.** Nicole Pelletier, Louise Jobin (asst.) **make-up** Marie-Angèle Protat **hair** Gaétan Noiseux **a.d.** Pierre Magny (1st), Marie Thérèse (2nd), François Mercille (trainee) **unit man.** Pierre Laberge **loc. man.** Carole Mondello **sec. of p.** Carmella Guillemineau **asst. cam.** Robert Guertin (1st), Michel Girard (2nd) **props mast.** Normand Simpson, Jacques Chamberland, Hélène Hébert (asst.), Vincent Fournier (asst.) **p. asst.** Christiane Lacroix, Christian Bénard, Jean-Pierre Fritz,

Pierre-Paul Rodrigue, Pierre Plante **construct. co-ord.** Melvern Prupas, Roméo Turcotte (man.) **carp.** Léo Miousse, Claude Bertrand, Jocelyn L'Heureux, Ernest Corsol, Honoré Doyon, Lactance Fillion, Roger Riendeau, Marcel Guérin, Daniel Perreault, Raymond St-Georges **vintage cars** Jacques Arcouette **elec.** Jacques Fortier, Claude Fortier (asst.) **key grip** Serge Grenier **l.p.** Émile Genest, Juliette Huot, Denise Filiatrault, Gabriel Arcand, Pierre Curzi, Serge Dupire, Stéphane Audran, Daniel Ceccaldi, Paul Berval, Louise Laparé, Rémi Laurent, Anne Létourneau, Donald Pilon, Gérard Poirier, Paul Dumont, Kate Trotter, J. Léo Gagnon, Gilles Renaud, Marc Gélinas, Gilbert Comptois, Amulette Garneau, Ghyslaine Tremblay, Marielle Robert, Denis Lavergne, Guy Thauvette, René-Daniel Dubois, Malcolm Nelthorpe, André Breton, Sylvie Lachance, Pierre Fauteux, Jean-Guy Deschamps, Charles Dansereau, Jean-Claude Giguère, Léo St-Pierre, Steven Mendell, Gilles Rochette, Jean Guimond, Claude Grisé, Jean Ricard, Georges Delisle **compt.** Armand Soussan **acct.** Pierre Guèvremont, Carole Lagacé **pub.** Lucienne Appel, David Novek **Assoc. press attaché** Maurice Elia



"We are taking 'les Plouffe' out of the kitchen and into the streets," says director Gilles Carle: Serge Dupire illustrates the point

Threshold

Richard Pierce, director of the film currently being shot under the working title *Threshold*, will not let up. On location north of Kleinberg, Ontario, he prepares to shoot an operating room scene which requires an extra table, completely and authentically laid out with surgical equipment. Informed by one of the crew that they have neither an extra table, nor the scalpels, forceps and tongs to put on it, Pierce dispatches someone to make the table and listens carefully to suggested sources for the needed surgical implements.

The extra table and its trimmings will only be visible in the distance in the shot Pierce is planning, but he must have it and it must be right. In his baseball cap, flannel shirt, jeans and sneakers, he looks as though he could be trundling across suburban lawns winging newspapers at doorsteps. Despite his youthful appearance and unassuming manner, he listens intensely and speaks with reason and authority. He has blocked out and story-boarded all of *Threshold* himself and has a confident grasp of the material. In fact, a sense of competence and diligence seems to characterize everyone's role.

Set somewhere between 1990 and



photo: John Williamson

Crossing the *Threshold* into the miracle of medical science in 1995 is Donald Sutherland,

1995, the screenplay, written by James Salter (*Downhill Racer*) explores the ramifications of implanting an artificial heart. The film's uniqueness will stem from its scrupulous authenticity and novelistic development of characters on several levels.

Filming *Threshold* has required several locations. The New Ottawa General Hospital and York University have been used

to convey a sense of future time. The Ontario Veterinarians' College in Guelph was filmed as the research facility where the heart was developed on animals. The set in Kleinberg will be used to film the operating scenes.

It took six weeks to recreate, in a honeycombed layout of four cells, the operating rooms in which Donald Sutherland will implant the artificial heart into a young girl. The set was created with equipment and technicians on loan from Hewlett Packard and Ohio Nuclear. The incubators, surgery lamps, operating tables and surgical utensils are all genuine. Dr. Bernard Goldman and Dr. Ernie Michel, both from Toronto General Hospital, along with cardiac scrub nurses are on set to authenticate the medical procedures to be filmed. One of the producers, Robert Sax, claims that *Threshold* will have "an authenticity that people won't even notice."

To acquire the finesse with scalpel and forceps he will need as Dr. Thomas Vrain, Sutherland practiced surgical techniques while in London filming *Eye of the Needle*. He also spent several days in Houston at the Texas Heart Institute watching Dr. Denton Cooley work. Cooley, who is known for transplanting hearts in the sixties and early seventies, has a cameo role in *Threshold*. Sutherland will operate on latex hearts developed especially for the film by Gord Smith of Gore Boys. The hearts beat and fibrillate, but Robert Sax insists that the audience will be "fascinated, not repulsed" by the surgery.

Threshold promises to be well made. Sax feels it's fair to say that the film is

Threshold

p.c. Passage Films Inc. 1980 **exec.p.** Jon Stan **p.** Michael Burns **line p.** Robert Sax **legal & admin. head** Philip Johnston **asst. to p.** Luanna R. Bayer **p. sec.** Lena Cordina **d.** Richard Pearce **consultant** Bill Yahraus **p. man.** Barbara Laffey **asst. p.man.** Judy Watt **loc.man.** Peter Davis **unit man.** Maureen Fitzgerald **asst.d.** Kim Kaufman (1st), Pedro Gando (2nd), Jerome McCann (3rd) **cont.** Gillian Richardson **Mr. Sutherland's asst.** Maurice Dunster, Bob Watts **p.account.** Dorothy Precious **bookkeeper** Mar **p.sec.** Shalhevet Goldhar, Victoria Sleeper **p. office asst.** Mark Achbar **craftservice** Rebecca McKenzie **art d.** Anne Pritchard **asst. art d.** Jackie Field, Lindsey Goddard **set dec.** Anthony Greco **asst. set dress.** Claire Smerdon, Susan Kyle, Gordon Sim **prop. master** Don Miloyevich **asst.props** Laird McMurray **special efx design.** Gordon Smith **special efx op.** Dan Bezaire **art depart. sec.** Karen Boulton **props trainee** John Gallaro **tech. advisor** Nancy Downey **ward.** Sharon Purdy (design), Brittney Burr (mistress), Lorraine Carson (asst.), Anna Nikolajevich (trainee) **seamstress** Brenda Colling, Allison Till **makeup** Shonagh Jabour, Wally Schneiderman (Mr. Sutherland), Suzanne Benoit (asst.) **hair.** Judi Cooper-Sealy, Jenny Arbour (asst.) **construct.man.** Brian James **d.o.p.** Michel Brault **asst. cam.** René Daigle, Sylvain Brault (2nd) **2nd cam.op.** Vic Sarin **cam.depart.trainee** Rita Johnson **steadicam op.** Louis De Erntstead **video tape consult.** Michael Lennick **stills** John Williamson

sd.rec. Bryan Day **boom** Victor Gamble **asst.sd.** Michael Lacroix **gaf.** Jacques Paquet, Roger Bate **best boy** Richard Allen **genny op.** Ken Smale **elec.** Bill Brown **key grip** Lou Graydon **grip** Jim Craig, Lee Wright **cut. room** Quinn Sound (Microphonic) **ed.** Susan Martin **asst. ed.** Elaine Foreman (1st), Richard Kelly (2nd) **drivers** John Pace (capt.), Paul Valley (Mr. Sutherland), Jeff Steinberg, Randy Jones, Don Payne, John Vanderpas, David Cotton **i.p.** Donald Sutherland, Jeff Goldblum, Allan Nicholls, Sharon Acker, Jana Stinson, Jessica Steen, Mavor Moore, Mare Winningham, Lally Cadeau, John Marley, Michael Lerner, James Douglas, Marilyn Gardner, Bob Warner, Robert Joy, Barbara Gordon, Jonathan Welsh, Jan Muzynski, Bob Hannah, Steve Ballantine, Richard Blackburn, Maureen McRae, Paul Hecht, Michael C. Gwynne, Murray Westgate, Robert Goodier, Brenda Kamino, Deborah Kipp, Amy Naftolin, Luigi Corazza, Theresa Corazza, Tom Harvey, Kunio Suyama, Casey Stevens, Melody Ryane, Bob Haley, Eric Clavering, JoAnne Lane, Melleny Brown, Leroy Gallier, Stuart Gillard, Denton Cooley, Christopher Hinn, Michael Burns, Samantha Langevin, Julie Armstrong, Greg Tessaro, Lheila & Yasmina Palumbo, Jun Asahina, Ron Hartman, Ara Hovan, Kate Trotter, Ken James, Deborah Turnbull, Margaret Edgar, Stan Lesk, Jack Messinger, Barry Flatman, Harvey Chao, Dennis Hayes, Ian Orr, Gordon Jocelyn, Harry Gulkin, James Loxley, Peter Shane **pub.** Hannah Math (Budman/Math) **unit pub.** Glenda Roy **casting** Diane Polley, Victoria Mitchell **extras** Peter Lavender (Film Extra Service)

being made by "technically the best crew and cast ever assembled in Canada." Michel Brault (director of *Les ordres*, and director of photography of *Mon oncle Antoine* and *Kamouraska*) and his French Canadian crew dart about the set with wit and professionalism. They somehow manage to attend to their cameras while sustaining a repartee in accented English on the vicissitudes of World Series baseball.

Art director Anne Pritchard, exhausted after only three hours of sleep, smiles wanly as she tries to explain the effects she expects from the opaque white she has used in the operating rooms. There will not be an antiseptic glare in any of the scenes shot on this set. It seems that the actors will be cast in a faint penumbra of light on the periphery of the bright pool created by the surgery lamps. Pritchard suggested that this aura could lend the scenes an unearthly quality. Considering the film's theme this ethereal effect may be intended to hint at the surreal possibilities presented by medical science. Sax promises that the surgery footage "won't look like operating-room scenes ever seen before." He describes the effects as, "otherworldly. Not surrealistic, hyper-realistic!" When asked how these effects would be attained, he replies that "there are big secrets" for which we must "wait and see."

But *Threshold* will not be just a bag of medical special effects. Sax says the story is about "the effects of an artificial heart on the characters." Central to the drama is a young girl's need for an artificial heart in order to live. But Sax emphasizes that the story "is not morbid, but insightful." The audience will see the drama from the surgeon's point of view, not the patient's. From this perspective the film assumes an objectivity that will prevent it from becoming melodramatic. Sax believes that "the audience won't feel it is a victim." Instead, it will see a film that "develops characters the way a novel does, dealing with the intricate relationships between people." Sax also stresses the film's coherence: "Everything fits in. There is no cliché dialogue. There are no silhouettes. Even the bad guys are human. Mayor Moore portrays a gruff bastard, but he is not two-dimensional."

Threshold aims to be an uplifting film. It is possible that medical science will be attributed an omnipotence superior to that which it already has. So far, indications are that those making this film may well succeed in capturing the depth and significance they are after.

Walter Owen

The Odyssey of the Pacific

"A film for adults, but mostly for children," is how director Fernando Arrabal describes his latest project, *Odyssey Of The Pacific*, a \$2 million Canada-France co-production filmed on location this fall in Montreal.

The Spanish-born, internationally renowned playwright and director conceived the *Odyssey* story after his own children's tales of their extraordinary adventures in their sleeping and waking dreams intrigued him. Writing the script, with old friend Mickey Rooney in mind for the starring role, Arrabal and Romaine Legargeant, the Paris producer of Arrabal's last two films, contacted Montreal producer Claude Léger, whose last film was the favourably acclaimed *The Lucky Star*. The creativity and imagination of Arrabal's script convinced Léger to undertake the project.

Like his previous film work, *Viva la muerte*, *J'irai comme un cheval fou*, and *L'arbre de Guernica*, *Odyssey* combines Arrabal's richly poetic vision of avant-garde fantasy and imagination with an awareness of a harsher reality drawn from the director's own difficult and painful childhood experience. But the playful and whimsical style of his latest film is a radical departure from the darker nature of his earlier work.

The story begins as nine-year-old Lis

and seven-year-old Toby (Annick and Jonathan Starr, in their first screen roles), spend their summer vacation in the country with their aunt Elsa (Monique Mercure), and their uncle Alex (Jean-Louis Roux), wrapped in a comfortable world of television, daydreams, and electric model train sets.

Enter Hoang (Ky Huot Uk, also in his first film role), a seven-year-old Cambodian refugee placed temporarily in Elsa and Alex's custody, who has lost his father and was separated from his mother on a Cambodian beach when the boat took him away. The children become fast friends. Toby is a passionate dreamer whose fantasies involve a major part of the film; he dreams of walking a circus wire, commanding a tank brigade, traveling in outer space, or conducting a symphony orchestra (shot with members of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and 75 extras at Montreal's Monklund Theatre) alongside his pet duck Federico. Toby's dreams of grandeur are contrasted with Hoang's more painful imagination, as he recalls memories of his father and the scene at the beach where he was taken from his mother.

One day while exploring in the woods, the children discover a hidden Pacific steam locomotive and later, the home of Old Thubal (Mickey Rooney), a feisty



Chewing the fat over a coke and a stogie are Mickey Rooney and Guy Hoffman

IN PROGRESS

renegade who once piloted the engine. Now, though crippled, he still opposes efforts by the Mayor (Guy Hoffman) to place him in a rest home. After Thubal swears the children to silence about his secret locomotive, he lets them fix it up.

But reality intrudes when Hoang must leave to live with his permanent sponsors and Thubal is forced to go into the rest home. Discovering some coal in an abandoned mine, the children start up The Pacific and plan a fantastic escape to Cambodia, where Hoang would be reunited with his mother and Thubal safe from the rest home. But at the last moment Thubal stays behind, allowing the children to elude the authorities and escape on their fantastic voyage.

Getting Mickey Rooney for the role of Old Thubal was not easy. During the six-week shooting schedule he was performing six nights, Monday through Saturday, on Broadway in the hit play **Sugar Babies**; so a six-passenger private jet was leased for \$25,000 to fly Rooney, his wife Janice, and his travelling companion Dick Paxton into Montreal Sunday mornings. His scenes were done exclusively on Sundays and Mondays, and Rooney was flown back to New York in time for Monday night's performance. Three successive weekends of this arduous routine completed Rooney's six-day contract.

"He's just fantastic to work with," says production manager Suzanne Roi. "And such a professional. With him, it's one or two takes and that's it."

"I show up," is how the veteran of 58 years in show business and over 150 films explains his preparation for a role. "Actors

The Odyssey of the Pacific

Co-production Canada/France. **p.c.** Ciné-Pacific Inc. 1980 **p.** Claude Léger (Montréal), Ken et Romaine Legargeant (Paris) **asst. to p.** Anne Burke **p.man.** Suzanne Roy **asst. p.** Yolaine Rouleau **p.man.** Michel Siry **p.man.a.** Harold Trépanier **p.sec.** Jacqueline Soussan **sec. of p.** Pascale Reiher **sec.** Fernando Arrabal **d.** Fernando Arrabal **1st a.d.** Michel Gauthier **2nd a.d.** François Chopineau **2nd a.d.** Michèle Mercure **art. d.** Claudine Lagrive **art. d.** René Petit **cont.** Catherine Breton **d.o.p.** Ken Legargeant **cam.** Claude Larue **1st a. cam.** Daniel Jobin **1st a. cam.** (cam. 2) Jocelyn Simard **2nd a. cam.** Camille Maheux **sd.** Claude Hazanavicius **boom** Denis Dupont **set dec.** Fernand Durand **props** Serge Bureau **props asst.** Simon Lahaye, Pierre Gros D'Aillon **sp. effects** Jacques Godbout, Louis Craig **1st elec.** Denis Baril **2nd elec.** Brian Bakear **machiniste** Raymond Lamy **cost. des.** François Laplante **ward.** Dominique Forest, Louise Rousseau **make-up** Micheline Foissy **drivers** Pascal Roulin, Daniel Mercure, Yves Lamarre, Pierre Siry **children** governess Sandra St-Laurent **accounters** Micheline Bonin (Canada), Natacha Poloudnenko (France) **stills** Takashi Seida, Fred Smith **l.p.** Mickey Rooney, Jonathan Staar, Annick, Ky Huot Uk, Jean-Louis Roux, Monique Mercure, Guy Hoffman, Valda Dalton, Jean-Pierre Saunier, Maurice Podbrey, Vlasta Vrana **pub.** David Novek Associates

are the luckiest people in the world — grown-up children getting paid damn well to do something that's a lot of fun!" Reflecting on his own status as the movies' most famous grown-up child, he adds, "All grown-ups have a child within them but are afraid to show it. For the actor, the minute the child dies, he's on the way out."

Locating an authentic steam locomotive

was necessary for the film, and it was found in Ottawa's Museum of Science and Technology. A Pacific-type G5 class engine built by Canadian Pacific Railways in 1944, it is the last existing locomotive of its model in Canada. Insured for a quarter of a million dollars and rented for \$15,000, the Pacific was driven by its own steam to a location in Hudson, Quebec. Since the museum's curators cautiously forbade the engine to be operated after October 1st, for fear its steam might condense to ice in sudden cold weather, a two-week shooting schedule in Hudson was reduced to two days, where all scenes involving the moving locomotive were filmed with over 400 extras. The Pacific was then moved under its own power, and by crane, to a location at the Canadian Railway Museum in St. Constant, Quebec, for the sequences in the woods.

A further challenge to Arrabal is making the film in English, a language he does not speak. "Actually, it's an advantage, because it gives me time to stop and think about the words and how they should be conveyed," he said, through an interpreter. Arrabal communicates in French with the predominantly Québécois cast and 47-member crew, and even with Mickey Rooney, who surprised the set with his capable knowledge of the language.

Principal photography was completed in Montreal in the middle of October, and *Odyssey* is being edited in Paris. The producers anticipate a world-wide release by September 1981.

Bruce Malloch



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Key to Credit Abbreviations

p.c. production company **p.** producer/
production **d.** director **d.o.p.** director
of photography **sc.** script/screenplay
ed. editing/editor **mus.** music **sd.**
rec./re-rec. sound recording/re-recor-
ding **a.d.** assistant director **asst.** assis-
tant **loc. man.** location manager **ward.**
wardrobe **cost. des.** costume design
set dec. set decoration **cam. op.**
camera operator **elec.** electrician
carp. carpenter **special efx.** special
effects **acct.** accountant **compt.**
comptroller **sec.** secretary **l.p.** leading
players **pub.** publicity **col.** colour **dist.**
distributor.

Special Section

CANADIAN SCREENWRITERS

Do Canadian screenwriters have what it takes to write good films?

With controversy now raging over Canadian film content, the role of the screenwriter has come under serious scrutiny. The writers themselves have been lost in the shuffle for too long; but finally, they are making themselves heard. This special section is devoted to their individual perspectives and opinions.

Canadian filmmakers – take note!

Keeping the faith

by Jim Henshaw

Despite his talent as an actor, screenwriter Jim Henshaw refuses to be cast in the role of industry scapegoat. He's convinced that Canadian screenwriters, if given the chance, will prove themselves second to none.

I'm a screenwriter. To write this, I'm assuming the identities of a lot of screenwriters, under the likely assumption that if I stay in this business long enough, everything that has happened to them will eventually happen to me.

To protect both the innocent and the guilty — there is already too much gossip in this industry — I haven't bothered with names. Besides, the innocent and the guilty are sometimes interchangeable — they shift roles depending on your perspective.

"There aren't any good scripts in Canada!" You've all heard that before; from producers defending their latest trip to L.A. at taxpayers' expense, to lawyers lobbying for a little more leeway on their clients' CCA. From directors defending their choice of material, to the actor whose role in one film hasn't led to immediate casting in another, or made him a star.

In short, much of what's wrong with the Canadian film industry is *our fault*, right? Because anybody who's ever read a Hollywood paperback knows

that you can't make a good film out of a bad script. This presumption — that fine Canadian scripts are not available — raises the obvious question, how come? Well... maybe because I've got a few locked in a drawer, stuck in a safety deposit box, cached in my agent's vault, hidden in my lawyer's office; bound and copied, finished pieces of material that could go in front of the cameras tomorrow — as has every other screenwriter worth his salt. In most cases, it is material that has been read and rejected by every major producer in the country. A conservative estimate, based on the material I've read personally, would indicate that there are 50 film scripts out there that could turn this country from the "B" movie capital of the world into a producing nation we could all be proud of overnight.

So, you ask, why don't we keep releasing them to the marketplace until they find a buyer? Because, based on past experience, we can't bear to. It is difficult to have two years of work given a price tag of \$1.00 by a reputable producer for a 90-day option, or receive

three rejection slips from Canadian producers on the same day your script is purchased by a foreign major. A few years ago I submitted a script about discothèques and singles bars to a producer who didn't want to do it because Disco wouldn't last and, because it takes a year for a film to reach the public, he didn't want to be left with unsalable product. A year later, almost to the day, **Saturday Night Fever** went into release. A few months ago, with Disco finally gasping its last, that same producer approached me wondering what had happened to that script. A while ago you couldn't give a Western script away. Now, after a summer of Hollywood Westerns failing at the box office Canadian producers are beginning to shoot them. They must all be praying that **Heaven's Gate** turns into another **Star Wars**.

*Jim Henshaw is a free-lance actor/screenwriter who lives in Toronto. His feature film credits include: **The Supreme Kid** and **A Sweeter Song**. He is currently working on a one-hour T.V. drama.*

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself why I, as a screenwriter consciously choose to spend a good part of my life locked up with a coffee pot and a typewriter trying to squeeze some element of human experience into 120 pages of semi-intelligent prose?

For my health? Hardly...

For the glamour? A little hard to collect adulation from a humming Olivetti. Women? Give me a break! Who's interested in a caffeine addict who whispers the same sweet nothing over and over until he hits on the right structure! Money? According to ACTRA less than 1% of the 150 million dollars invested in Canadian films last year found its way to Canadian writers.

How about because I love it! And because I assume that I've got something to say or a story other people might want to share. So why would I go through all the pains of trying to create characters to tell that story, build a 90-minute plot structure for them, come up with exotic or at least interesting locations, some sex, action, excitement, a few laughs, a couple of one-liners you could put on a T-shirt, maybe cultivate an idea nobody's explored on film before... if I didn't know what I was doing?

I wouldn't. I don't. So how come what I write doesn't turn up on the screen?

Why don't those six to eight people I meet at every party, with their great ideas for a movie, ever write them? Why don't all those producers crossing the 49th with a studio-rejected American opus in their hot little hands make the changes and rewrites they need themselves?

Quite simply because they can't. The art of screenplay writing is one of the most skilled and highly technical crafts in the film business. It's not simply a matter of having the discipline to spend five to ten hours a day doing what your first grade teacher taught you to do with a pencil. It is a medium that denies the open boundaries of the novel or the free flowing form of the theatre. It requires an intimate understanding of all the other cinematic crafts and still imposes the added strictures of time and occasionally budget.

Then, when the months of sweat and neural acrobatics have condensed themselves into a finished form, a producer faced with an over-budget production will solve his problem by tearing 10 to 20 pages out of his script. Or a director,

who wouldn't risk a D.O.P.'s wrath by switching on a camera and shooting a scene, will pick up a pen and make alterations to the printed page. Or a production manager, who has scored a 100-year-old locomotive will arrange for a few new scenes to make full financial use of it. Or an actor, whose major claim to fame is a TV series based on his California persona, will be allowed to paraphrase dialogue that doesn't "feel right" to him.

Don't any of them realize what those things do to a well-written and carefully

constructed script? Hardly! And those who do, are as aware as the Canadian writer is, that given the current pre-packaged and pre-sold requirements of Canadian film, the script is secondary to the identifiable formula package.

I once had a conversation with a producer who was about to go ahead with a multi-million dollar film of a very good script. I asked who was directing and was told that he had made offers to three well-known directors: one whose forte was comedy; another's whose was action; and the third has a reputation



illustration: George Ungar

for getting you Wednesday's footage by Tuesday night. All three of these men were going to give the producer a different film, but that was of less importance to him than getting a name director with a track record to help his package.

What do you think the average Truffaut film would look like with Sam Peckinpah directing, Clint Eastwood starring and music by The Village People? How about *Jaws* in the hands of Ken Russell or *Star Wars* with Paul Mazursky at the helm?

No matter what shape your script is in, it won't work unless there is a strong point of view controlling the elements that grow out of it. We've all heard a bar band do a cover of a Beatles' tune. There's always something missing from the original. Yet give that same piece of music to another artist who understands what those lyrics and chord structures are meant to communicate, and he can turn it into a version that even enhances the original.

No record producer goes into the studio with a song without knowing whether he is going Country and Western, Rhythm and Blues or Punk. To put a good script to its best use, it is necessary for a producer to know exactly what kind of film he wants and be willing to risk his "deal" to get the right elements for it. Every time he gives in, or compromises to move the production forward, he is one step closer to a bad film.

As for directors... How many of them alter a script to fit in a crane shot or use a Steadicam? How many destroy a perfect three-act structure to give a particularly tasty piece of talent an extra scene, or make utmost use of a location? Surely, the true test of a director's talent lies in his ability to exert his own, intelligent perspective of humanity, and apply his technical expertise *within the confines imposed by the written material*.

As an actor, I can recall being part of many first-production plays. A script was seldom changed until every other approach to a problem within a scene had been attempted. Only at the point that the actors were exhausted, the director was out of ideas, and opening night was too close for comfort, was the writer asked to write a line.

That doesn't happen in film; maybe because rehearsal time is so seldom available, costs are much higher and the directors have so much more on their minds. Still, there is no excuse for an actor not to have wrung every possibility out of himself before he gives up. No writer who is any good feels his work is carved in stone, nor does he write anything that he feels is unnecessary. However, should the crunch come, the changes should at least be up to the artist who has lived with the character longer.

A few days ago I had the opportunity to read a new script. It was nothing short of brilliant. Almost perfect. I told the writer so. He smiled weakly and handed me seven pages of changes ordered by the production company — a very long list of non-ideas designed to make the story bland, uninteresting and salable to TV. In other words, it may be true that you can't make a good film out of a bad script. But you can make a bad film out of a good script! *Rebel Without a Cause* could, without too much interference, have been *High School Confidential*. Only the work of strong and uncompromising artists saved it from that fate.

This is why so many writers withhold

their best work. They have yet to find anybody they can trust.

Which is *not* to say that there aren't any good producers, directors, or actors in Canada. The producers here can hold their own with those of any other country. Hollywood included. Many Canadian directors are capable of exceptional work, but some of the best just don't seem to get the opportunities they should, while some of the worst "succeed" in churning out failure after failure.

My own L.A. experience has convinced me that the only reason Canadian actors have trouble getting green cards is that most of them are so good there wouldn't be many Americans working after a while.

Ultimately, the question is, how do we get all these good Canadian scripts off the shelves and onto the screens of the world where they'll do us all some good? First, because film is a collaborative art, we must start talking intelligently to one another about what we are trying to say and do. If all that is expected of a producer is a finished film, we will never rise above the "B" movie level that only asks for distributable or exploitable product. Once the producer begins to make conscientious demands of the director, he, in turn, can begin to make focused and intelligent demands of his cast and crew that will raise their level of work as well.

It is crucial that the writer be allowed to exercise greater control of his material; not to the point of controlling the industry, but to the extent that he can assume his rightful place as the seminal artist on the production. After all, he knows his job better than anybody else and should be allowed to perform it. One telling anecdote concerns a writer meeting a producer in L.A. The producer smiled at the writer and said, "I just got your new script. It's very good. Who wrote it for you?" The writer smiled back, "I did. Who read it to you?"

This writer-vs-the-world debate has been going on in Hollywood since the first gag man walked onto a set at Hal Roach. Instead of just cloning an industry that imitates it, surely we can learn from others' mistakes. We can't afford to have 85% of our material fail at the box office as Hollywood can. If the rest of the industry begins to trust our own writers to provide what we need, then respects their contributions, our closet-creators will finally emerge with a little more faith and, most likely, a lot of fine fiction.



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Brass Tacks

by John Kent Harrison

For film professor and award-winning screenwriter John Kent Harrison, it takes more than talent to be a good screenwriter. His nuts-and-bolts approach to teaching the craft is an insight for all those aspiring to write for film.

A friend of mine — a fellow fat on insight, lean on dialogue — delights in reducing the people of the world into two general types: the winners, and wieners. My father — a man long on business experience, short on subtlety — narrows it down to “them what eats, and them what gets et.” If I were to typify the film business, I might be tempted to divide our crowd into the producers, and the writers. But there, for the most part, I’d be getting too simplistic.

It’s far too easy to bandy about the notion that diligent and sensitive writers are constantly maligned, man-handled and mangled by the porky, jewel-encrusted digits of money-grubbing film moguls. If we’re straight about it, there are easily as many screenwriters with uncompromising Chippendale egos as there are producers who bulldoze the smoldering remains of their Monte Cristos through the eggs Benedict after “taking” a breakfast meeting at the Courtyard Café.

In reality, there are only a handful of screenwriters in this country; and even fewer producible scripts (even by those same writers): but Canada’s not unique in that regard. If you think for one minute that they’re chucking producible scripts down the drain in Tinsel Town, think again. For producible script is a commodity in any language, in any country, at any time. Such an item isn’t, repeat, *is not* hammered out by an inspired writer in one six-week blitz. It takes re-writing, criticism, re-writing, feed-back, re-writing all the way to the first day of production. In short, the producer/writer relationship demands collaboration, trust and a mutual understanding of the craft.

And here, at last, we come to the nub of it: understanding the craft.

If you are an aspiring writer and you are looking to get to Square One, you obviously must find a producer interested in your material. Not just any producer, but

someone with a track record of *well-crafted* films, regardless of subject or genre. Be careful! You don’t want a slam, bam, thank-you mam relationship. You want experience. You want to improve. So you want to find someone who understands that *story* is fundamental to narrative film. As fundamental as performance or economy of shooting.

My experience in the last few years tells me that too few producers understand the carpentry of story-telling, and too few screenwriters have any concern for what elements make a movie large enough to sell in the international market-place. The real luxury in our fledgling film community is a constructive working relationship between an experienced producer and an experienced writer, both of whom are educated and enlightened as to the need and craft of the other.

For the past several years I have seen film students float and flail within the sordid pipe dream of a career in motion pictures. Most of them jump into 16mm production after a few Super-8 quickies, produce a “student film,” then lunge head first into the industry thinking they will be the exception to the rule that nobody wants a film student unless he or she can speed-shift a standard or double-cream a coffee. They graduate with a few technical skills and little, if any, grasp of narrative craft.

Fortunately, last year, the tide began to turn, as the students — would-be writer/director/producers — became more cautious, more curious, more sensible. In fact, they became wiser. Why? Because of the introduction of an *obligatory* screenwriting course; a course which

*John Kent Harrison teaches film in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University. His recent scripts include the final draft of the Oscar-nominated **Bravery in the Field**, the 90-minute CBC drama **Coming Out Alive**, and the feature film **Bells**.*

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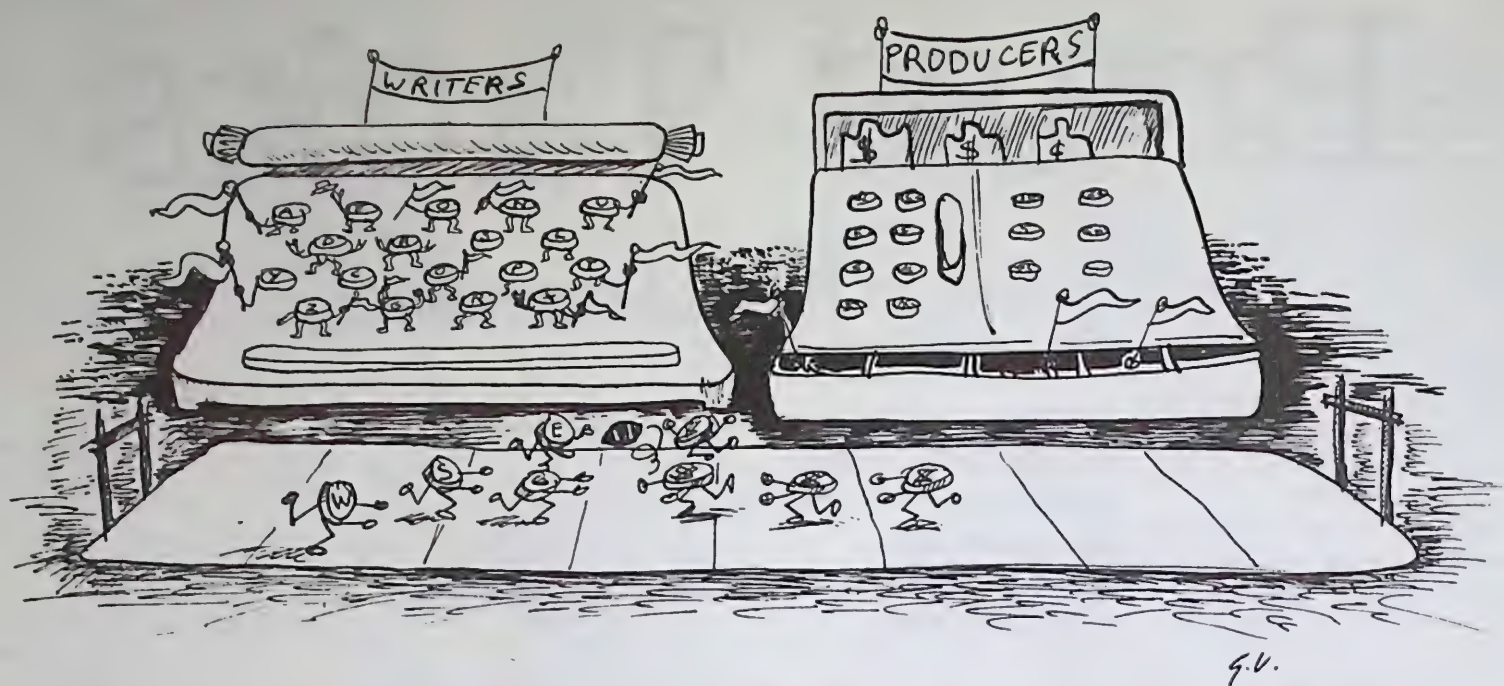


illustration: George Ungar

examined the nuts, bolts, pipes and carpentry of dramatic writing for film. Suddenly celluloid was no longer a god in its own right. Suddenly film was reduced to what it is: a medium, a vehicle to tell a story. Being a filmmaker was no big deal, but ah, being a storyteller... now that was something!

The approach to this course was holistic in that it tried to integrate the various elements which constitute a narrative film: writing, storytelling, dramaturgy, performance, and the nature of the film medium itself. The course ran in tandem with a required production course which examined the differences and similarities between film and video. Some of the writing projects which overlapped with this production course, consequently, provided material for second and third year productions. The whole point of this holistic disposition was to suggest that writing cannot be separated from production. Just as a potential writer must understand how to use a location to tell a story, a potential location manager must understand story in order to compromise wisely.

The course began with the nature of writing in general, and the short story in particular. Reading aloud helped to demonstrate how a writer's perceptions are 'shown' through the use of *concrete detail*. This was an important point to drive home: credibility is achieved through detail. The further away from realism one gets (the western or science fiction) the more accurate those details must be. I found the opening few pages of *True Grit* (the novel) a good vehicle for this. Once the students understood the importance of such details they began to appreciate the value of solid research as a background for any script created outside the world of personal experience.

From there, we moved to the craft of storytelling. First

simplistically: a character with a passionate motivation trying to overcome roadblocks in order to achieve some specific goal. On this level people connected immediately with *Alien*, *Jaws*, *A Little Romance*, *Breaking Away*, and, well, a hundred others. Then on to the examination of short stories. I happened to use Flannery O'Connor's *The Life You Save May Be Your Own* which, on the surface, seems abstract, but upon closer inspection is shown to exhibit a simple storytelling technique. In this way students soon realized that to know the "carpentry" of storytelling only provides the tools and license to become more expressive. As my earnestly random colleague, Dennis Murphy, paradoxically suggests, "structure is freedom." O'Connor would have surely concurred, for it was she who said that the art of writing is the art of tempering the imagination with reason.

The third area we looked at was the nature of dramaturgy. Here I can do no better than to recommend Aristotle's *Poetics* and Lajos Egri's marvelous book, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*. Talk about concrete details! The way we applied the text was through the analysis of various plays and films. The two major problem areas for students seemed to be plot construction and character creation.

The analysis of a plot usually revolved around the set-up and pay-off syndrome. That is, if you saw an action, a detail or a piece of business which solved a problem and paid off a scene, you had to ask yourself where and how that piece of information was set up in some previous scene. For example, in *A Little Romance* it was essential to "set up" the fact that the young boy secretly kept track of horse races and was a consistent winner in order to "pay off" the scene where he uses the horse races as the means to raise money for their adventure. A close examination of plots

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will reveal set-ups without pay-offs and a plethora of pay-offs without set-ups. These are what are commonly known as "holes in the plot"

The creation of a unique *fictional* character posed a real conundrum to most of the students. Everyone was able to draw a character based on personal experience, but when it came down to inventing something entirely original, flesh and blood became bark and sap. At best I was only able to offer a few suggestions. For example, character types outlined in behavioral psychology, and the natural conflicts of nuclear and phenomenal clusters are good starting points. Here also is where *concrete detail* is absolutely essential. Outline specific flaws, paradoxical behavior, tags, idiosyncratic consistencies, intelligence levels (students for some bizarre reason always seem to want their characters to have "average intelligence"). Two good films to examine are **Strangers On A Train** and **The African Queen**. Both are straightforward character conflicts which provide much instruction on the nature of creating character through detail.

Before moving along to the subject of performance, two seminal screenwriting maxims are worth mentioning:

- 1) When telling the story of **Goldilocks and the Three Bears**, bring on the bears (courtesy of Stanley Colbert) — i.e. get to the point.
- 2) When telling the story of people lost in space looking for an alien, don't give it to them right away, or all at once — i.e. hold back on the monster.

You might connect with the structure of **Jaws** for example, where the terror of the shark is "brought on" in the first scene but the actual monster is "held back" until the last.

Now, performance. It should be obvious that you cannot write film drama without understanding the needs of an actor. The best way to do this is to try a little acting yourself. For this reason I introduced video-tape exercises which helped students understand physical and psychological objectives, and how emotion can be translated through objects even more effectively than through words. Students had an opportunity to write and act out small scenes which were played back to demonstrate how most writers over-depend on dialogue — at which point it was worth mentioning repeatedly the importance of *action*. The most rewarding outcome of these exercises was that the students began to *trust* the medium. They began to see how a simple close-up could carry the weight of ten lines of rarefied dialogue; how the slightest eye movement could suggest an unspoken back story a mile deep; how behavior took the place of belabour.

The more we examined this relationship between the writer and the medium, the more we were able to establish the meaning of certain camera movements, the impact of distances, the principle of ellipsis within the time frame, the difference between *establishing* and *slowly disclosing* information, and how economy of storytelling is achieved in film through the use of synecdoche (the use of a detail to represent the whole). Hitchcock, of course, was about the



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CANADIAN SCREENWRITERS

most accessible and articulate filmmaker at this level, and time was well spent analyzing his visual storytelling technique.

Midway through the course students were asked to put together what they had learned about the film medium, the nature of performance, dramaturgy and storytelling, by viewing a different film each week for five consecutive weeks. Each student saw the same film in order to facilitate class discussion. A standard form was provided which allowed space for each person to record observations on *concrete aspects* of the script, which included:

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Goal (passion/urgency)
Road blocks (physical/psychological)
Unity of Opposites (credibility of set-up/orchestration)
Character (motivation/tags)
Transitional periods (reaction dilemma decision resolution)
Character growth (protagonist/antagonist)
Visual quality (use of locations/angles, movements)
Aural quality (music-leitmotif/special emphasis/sound effects)
Acting (physical objectives/psychological objectives)
Dialogue (text/subtext)
Set-ups and pay-offs (mention five)
Time clock

Finally it all boiled down to the big pay-off: grading.

As the approach to teaching the course was based on "carpentry" or "nuts and bolts," it was important to follow through with a grading system which reflected that attitude. In other words, it would be wrong to give a subjective opinion of a student's project if all along you have been suggesting that writing is a craft which can be taught (not to be confused with insights and perception which can't). For this reason all the final scripts were graded according to a blueprint form, similar to the one which the students had used to analyze the films. My criteria included:

Premise
A concrete goal
Credible road blocks
Unity of Opposites (orchestration/credible set-up)
Character (growth, motivation, originality)
Visual quality
Aural quality
Physical reaction

Those who did well, did so because they had a handle on the craft, while those who did less well, relied solely on their talent. To be sure, there were derivative scripts and pat solutions. But much of that had to do with lack of maturity and experience — and the plain hard truth that it is difficult to write. The significant thing was that the majority of students finally had a grasp of the importance of story in creating a commercially viable film.

Just as the understanding of story is fundamental to good writing, so it is the backbone of good directing, good performing, and good producing. Not every student will become a screenwriter overnight; but every student armed with such knowledge, and such concern, cannot help but contribute significantly to the quality of our films and the future of our industry. This will be accomplished even as he or she is sent to gofer another tray of three regulars, five black and two sugar only.

Oh, and the Scotch and Coke goes to the porky guy smoking the Monte Cristo next to the chorus girls! (While you're over there, why not pitch him a story? He'll listen. And if he won't, there are plenty coming along who will.)

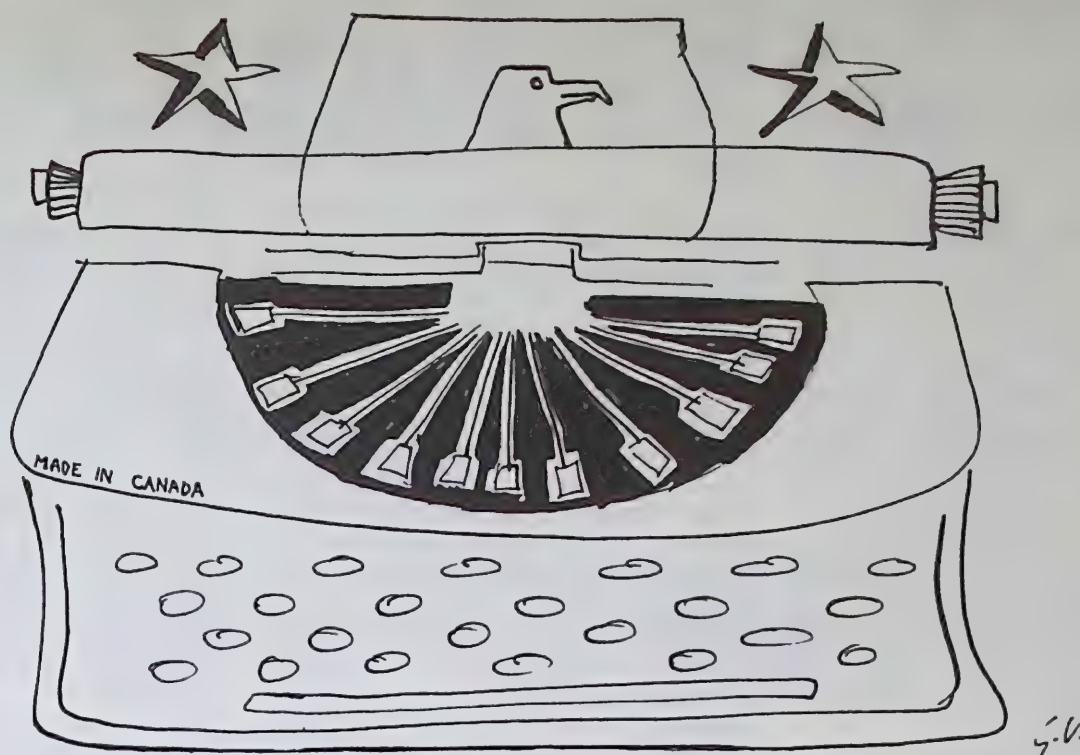


Illustration George Ungar

The L.A. Magnet

by Bryon White

Like many young screenwriters in search of opportunity, Bryon White went to L.A. There, he talked to other Canadians like himself, who consider Canada a stepping-stone to bigger and better things.

Every serious screenwriter accepts that the key to success is the writer's ability to create a screenplay that will motivate certain individuals, who have access to large sums of money, to spend that money on turning that screenplay into a feature film. Once a screenwriter has developed a reputation for satisfying those money people, who are obviously satisfied when their investment is returned, the interest in his work and the latitude granted him in future will be

greater; for he has finally established himself as, what the money men paradoxically call, a "safe risk."

Los Angeles has long been the most productive centre for feature filmmaking in the world. Consequently, it has attracted many talented and creative minds. Many of those who have found employment and success as innovative "safe risks" are Canadians, like Tom Hedley, Lionel Chetwynd, Céline La Frenière, René Balcer and Larry Mollin.

What prompted these five Canadian writers to head south, despite the expan-

*Bryon White has worked as an actor both on stage and in film, and has produced several plays in Toronto. He was assistant picture editor and music editor for **Circle of Two** and did sound revisions for **Wild Horse Hank** for NBC-T.V. and *Time/Life* broadcasts. He is currently co-writing a script with Mark Phillips, an L.A. producer.*

sion of the Canadian film industry?

Cinema Canada asked them about their experiences.

Tom Hedley, who is now adapting a novella into a screenplay for Barbra Streisand (and has sold two original scripts, one to Polygram and the other to Arthur Hiller), stresses that "Hollywood is no criteria for a good film. When Hollywood films are bad they're much worse than in Canada; but, because of the experience here (in L.A.), they know how to make crappy films work." Talking about the Canadian film industry, he remarks, "Canadian producers don't have depth unless they take a risk on doing original material; but the financial community doesn't allow for risk. Producers can't get creative because they're too busy raising money and swinging deals. They don't finance American films the same way. For every film a Canadian producer does he has to start a company. He's so stuck gathering monies together that he's almost forced not to be creative."

Screenwriter Lionel Chetwynd's credits include: the story idea (along with Patricia Resnick and Robert Altman) for Altman's *Quintet*, the screenplay for Harvey Hart's *Goldenrod*; the dialogue adaption of Mordecai Richler's screenplay for *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*; and many others. He is currently writing a TV movie about Mayer Rothchild to star Ed Asner.

Larry Mollin, who has written six plays for Toronto's *Homemade Theatre*; TV variety shows; *Easter Fever* and now *Drats*, both for Nelvana Animated Films, is currently writing a script for John Watson and Pen Densham's *Insight Productions*, and has sold a treatment to MGM. Both Mollin and Chetwynd seem to agree that Canada's problem is the producers. Says Mollin, "In Canada the producers are accountants and lawyers and they know very little about making films." Chetwynd elaborates that, "The problem with the Canadian film industry is that a lot of the producers are not sincere about making films but are in it for the lifestyle. They don't realize that making films is hard work, and they don't understand their craft, which is, knowing how it's done. And that can't be learned overnight." Of his Canadian experience, he comments that, "What you do in Canada is your entry payment to the U.S.," illustrating his motivation for moving south with the following analogy: "If you lived in the days of the Roman Empire, the people that were revered were the

generals. If one wanted to be a top general he went to Rome. Well, North America, being what it is, exalts and makes heroes of people in the entertainment business — and, quite frankly, Rome is here in L.A. Canada, at best, is Gaul."

Céline La Frenière found it difficult to leave Canada because she loves the country, but she claims that "Canada does not love its writers." La Frenière wrote the screenplay for the film *City On Fire*, and has recently completed a script with the working title *Lilian*, based on the life of Lilian Ailing, which is to star Julie Christie. Another of her screenplays, entitled *Breakaway*, concerns a poor French-Canadian girl who moves away from her revolutionary French-Canadian lover for the friendship of an upper class American girl. La Frenière is writing more Canadiana-type stories, like *Breakaway*, which are meeting with a much better reception in L.A. than in Canada. But, she qualifies, "If a good creative offer came to me from Canada, I'd do it, and not necessarily for financial gain."

Like René Balcer, many writers find that the producers and directors in L.A. are much more receptive than their counterparts in Canada. Balcer has been reading books and scripts, and batting ideas around with Monty Hellman, who is currently scheduled to direct a film for Coppola's Zoetrope Studio. Balcer says that his timing was right: "Monty needed someone at that time but no one offered to work for free with a strong commitment." This allowed him to be around when the people working with Hellman were developing a story for 20th Century-Fox. Balcer wrote the first twenty pages on his own, showed them to Hellman and the producer, who liked it enough to hire him to complete the script. Balcer doesn't feel that the Canadian film industry is all that bad. Echoing Chetwynd, he comments, "In fact, it's a great stepping stone for making it in L.A."

Many of the major producers in L.A. have a great deal of respect for Canadian talent. Whereas people in the States tend to specialize in one area of filmmaking, Canadians are diversified.

No doubt every serious Canadian screenwriter and aspiring screenwriter has considered the alternatives, of staying and trying to create a feature film industry indigenous to Canada, or going, to compete in the Hollywood system. But, as Chetwynd explains: "If you can make it within the system, you are given the greatest privilege of all mankind — the

opportunity to express yourself."

Canada is still one of the best places for any screenwriter or filmmaker to develop his craft. There are film schools, government grants, cheaper production costs, and two government-sponsored, internationally respected bureaucracies — the CBC and NFB — to aid Canadians in developing their craft: a craft that demands not only the ability to write, but also the knowledge of one's audience. If you are a screenwriter, it is wise to ask yourself if there are enough people in that audience who will pay money to see your film, which in turn will pay for the cost of manufacturing it. In the U.S. it is necessary to have an agent who will take your script to the producers, although that is not absolutely necessary in Canada. It is also a good idea to copyright your script with the Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada Bureau of Intellectual Property, and familiarize yourself with the ACTRA Writers Guild.

In the case of a feature film, a writer who is not a member of ACTRA is required to join before the producer executes a contract with him. For other than features, where ACTRA has jurisdiction, a writer can join upon receiving a third engagement. As ACTRA has established close links with the writers' unions in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia through their affiliation agreement, an ACTRA member can work freely as a writer in these countries (provided he satisfies Immigration requirements) and join any of the guilds without having to pay the initiation fee. Concerning green cards in the U.S., if a producer is interested in your script he can get you a work permit if it is necessary for you to be there, or sponsor you to get a green card. However, none of this is necessary if the script is actually going to be purchased.

For those interested, one of the most valuable books on screenwriting is Dwight V. Swain's *Film Scriptwriting*, published by Hasting House Communication Arts Books, New York.

If none of the screenwriters profiled here have actually written an international *tour de force*, they still have good reason to be proud of their success to date. They have established themselves as professionals, and assured themselves the opportunity for creative expression in both the U.S. and Canada. This, in turn, will further the creative risks they are willing to take. If we are lucky, one of those risks may be their return to Canada to advance the cause of screenwriting here. Write on!

Copyright

Better to be safe, than sorry

by Alexandra Hoy

Protecting your creative properties is not as complicated as you think. Lawyer Alexandra Hoy highlights the basics of copyright coverage — good insurance against potential heartache and expense.

Two partners develop a brilliant idea for a film. They have a falling out and one of the partners produces a film based on this idea. The other partner rages that his story has been "stolen". Can he sue for infringement of copyright?

A Canadian producer entitles his film, *Casablanca*. It is a new wave romance set in Casablanca in 1980. Infringement of copyright?

Copyright is an area of the law of particular concern to those involved in creative industries such as film, and yet, few people, other than lawyers with expertise in the field, understand exactly what copyright is.

What, then, is copyright?

Copyright is basically a creator's right to control the use of his or her work. It is a means of economically rewarding an individual for his creative labour. The rights given to the creator, or "author", of an original work are set out in the Copyright Act, which is a federal statute.

There is no copyright in an idea or a title. Scruples aside, you may steal your partner's ideas, and your competitor's clever titles¹. Copyright exists in "original works" only.

A "work" is basically the form in which an idea is expressed. A painting, a screenplay, a musical composition, a record and a film are all obvious examples of a

"work". Less obvious examples are such things as maps, geographical charts, graphs, and business directories. The "work" must be "original." For example, there is no copyright in a novel which is substantially a copy of an existing novel.

What Rights Does the Copyright Owner Have?

Copyright is made up of numerous different rights. These rights include the right to produce or reproduce the work, to perform the work in public, and to publish the work. Copyright also includes the right to make translations of the work and to control the reproduction or performance of the translated version. For example, James Clavell has the right to control the translation of *Shogun* to other languages.

The author of a novel, short story or article has the right to write a play or screenplay based on his novel. Similarly, the owner of the copyright of an original screenplay has the right to write a novel based on the screenplay, as Eric Segal did with *Love Story*. Only the copyright owner can authorize the making of a record, tape or film of his or her work. In addition, only the copyright owner can authorize the broadcasting of the work. The unauthorized broadcast of less than a total of three minutes from an Iowa State student-made film in 1972 cost

ABC \$32,520, when the University took it to court².

Who Owns the Copyright?

The first owner of the copyright is the author of the work, or if the author wrote or composed the work for his employer during the course of his employment, then the employer owns the copyright. For this reason, film producers prefer an agreement with a screenwriter or composer that provides that the screenwriter or composer is an employee, while a screenwriter or composer prefers to remain an independent contractor, or freelancer.

The entire copyright, or any one of the rights which makes up the copyright, can be "assigned" or "licensed." For example, the author of an original screenplay sells or "assigns" the right to make a film based on the screenplay to a film producer. On the other hand, a film producer will obtain a synchronization "license" for the piece of music which he plans to use in his film. The producer does not own the music: he has simply obtained permission to use the musical work in synchronization with the

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dramatic action of the film. As you see, your copyright is really a bundle of rights. You may sell one or more of the rights to another person, give someone else permission to use one of your rights, and keep a firm grasp on the remaining rights.

How Long Does Copyright Last

Copyright does not last forever. The basic rule in Canada is that copyright lasts in a work from the time it is created to a period of 50 years after the author's death. Where the work has not been published or performed before the author's death, copyright lasts until the work has been published or performed and for a term of 50 years thereafter.

Another exception exists with respect to photographs and records. The term of copyright for these works is 50 years from the time the original negative or master recording was made.

Copyright in the U.S., in works created or published since 1978, also lasts until 50 years after the author's death. In works created or published prior to 1978, copyright in the U.S. lasts for 28 years with a right to renew for another 28 years.

Often a filmmaker will use "stock" music from libraries which is referred to as being in the "public domain". A work which is in the "public domain" is simply a work in which the copyright has expired. For example, in 2001 Stanley Kubrick used music composed by Johann Strauss.

Should the Copyright be Registered?

In Canada, copyright exists in a work from the time it is created without the necessity of registration. However, if you do not register your work someone may "steal" it and argue that he had no reason to suspect that copyright existed. If this argument succeeds, you can stop the person from continuing to use your work without your permission, and without paying you for it, but you will not receive any money to compensate for past unauthorized use of the work.

An assignment of copyright should also be registered. If the author of a novel assigns his right to make a film based on his novel to one producer, who does not register this assignment, and the author then sells the same right to a second unknowing producer, who does register the assignment, the second producer would have the right to make the film based on the novel, and could force the other producer to halt work.

An application for registration of copyright or assignment of copyright should be

filed in the prescribed form, together with a registration fee of \$25 payable to the Receiver General of Canada, with The Copyright Office, Copyright and Industrial Design Branch, Bureau of Intellectual Property, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Ottawa/Hull, K1A 0E1. Application forms may be obtained by writing the Copyright Office. A Certificate of registration of copyright will be issued on receipt of the application form and fee.

Protection of Canadian Works in Foreign Countries

Two major international agreements, the Berne Convention and The Universal Copyright Convention, govern the protection of the works of Canada's authors in foreign countries. Basically, countries which are parties to these agreements have agreed that they will give foreign authors the same rights within their country as they give to their own citizens. For example, the Canadian author of a screenplay has the same rights in France as a French author, and is governed in the U.S. by U.S. law.

To be entitled to protection under The Universal Copyright Convention, all copies of the work must bear the symbol © accompanied by the name of the copyright owner and year of first publication. This form of copyright notice is not required if the foreign country is a party to The Berne Convention; however, as some countries, including the United States, are parties only to The Universal Convention, this copyright notice should be affixed to all copies of the work in a prominent position.

If it is anticipated that the work will find its way to the U.S. markets, the copyright owner should also register the work with the United States Copyright Office. As in Canada, registration is not necessary to create copyright but it is necessary in order to obtain full compensation for infringement. Application for copyright registration in the United States must be made on a form prescribed by the U.S. Copyright Office and must be accompanied by a copy of the work and the required fee.

A frequent concern of a screenwriter is that his script may be copied. Shortly after shooting on "Rednek America" began actor Max Baer, best known as Jethro of *The Beverly Hillbillies* quit the production, taking a copy of the script with him. Baer subsequently produced *Macon County Line*. Both *Rednek* and *Macon County Line*. Both *Rednek* and *Macon County Line* involved three young people harassed by the law enforcement officials in their

travels through the American south. Their vehicle breaks down, and they camp out. A murder occurs, and circumstantial evidence suggests the trio committed it. In *Rednek* one of the trio is later murdered; in *Macon* two are. Both movies contain a romantic interest between a female hitchhiker and one of the males in the trio, which includes a nude bathing scene, and, in both movies, the trio "rips off" a café owner. Both movies contain a service station scene, where the wife of the owner is depicted as a fat, coarse country woman. Infringement? No. The court held that these elements were common to many exploitation films and that there were significant differences in the films. *Macon* was set in the '50s and *Rednek* in the drug culture period of the '60s, and the sheriff and his wife, principal characters in each film, were portrayed very differently³. Undoubtedly, the producer of *Rednek*, and many readers, think this is unfair. But stop a minute: what script or film does not, to a certain extent, draw on existing plots, and characters? Copyright is necessary to protect the creator, but too strict an enforcement of copyright laws could hamper the creative process.

In summary:

1. Copyright exists in all original works, usually until 50 years after the author's death, without registration.
2. You will regret not registering your work in Canada and the United States if you ever have cause to sue for infringement in either country.
3. Put the © form of notice on all copies of your work.
4. Guard your original scripts jealously: copyright law will not always protect you from your zealous competitors.
5. This article is only meant as a rough guide to a complex area of the law: it is best to consult a lawyer when you have a copyright question.

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(1) Theft of a title may, however, infringe U.S. laws relating to unfair competition. For example, a book publisher will not be allowed to use the title of a film if such use suggests that its book is the "official" novel version of the movie when it is not. See *Orion Pictures Company, Inc. v. Dell Publishing Co. Inc.*, 471 F. Supp. 329, CCH Copyright Law Reports, par 25 084 (S.D.N.Y. 1979).

(2) See *Iowa State University v. American Broadcasting Co.* 475 Supp. 78 (S.D.N.Y. 1979) and 463 F. Supp. 902.

(3) See *Midas productions, Inc. v. Baer*, (no. 77-3912, 9th Cir. Nov. 19, 1979, affirming CV 76-579-DWW, C.D. Cal. 1977).

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Quebec's Technicians' Unions **Divided They Stand**

by Kevin Tierney

"Quebec" means "politics". Take the province's two technicians' unions: four years after their historical confrontation their wounds have barely healed; their talk of amalgamation is still pie in the sky — but their collective agreements with the producers have set a progressive example for Canada's other technicians.



Courtesy of the SNC, this union photo shows producer René Avon allegedly accompanied by his bodyguard, and "scabs" imported from Toronto to staff a shoot during "la grande grève"

By most accounts there are approximately 350 film technicians in Quebec who work at least part of the year. Certainly not a large number by any means. Two labor unions represent the interests of these 350 people: Le Syndicat national du cinéma (SNC) and L'Association des professionnels du cinéma du Québec (APCQ). In other parts of the world this might be viewed as a peculiar anomaly, but here in Quebec — where we seem to have two of everything — the situation is, if not quite *tout à fait normale*, at least understandable.

It might be comforting to some, if we were able to apply Canada's simplistic, national blueprint to these unions: i.e. one for the French, the other for the English. Unfortunately it isn't that easy.

Instead, we are forced to consider the paradox of unionizing free-lancers — never an easy task, especially with free-lancers working in a domain that appears to run on ego. We are also forced to recognize that in the film industry, as in most other areas of life here, there are profound differences in how we interpret our past, present, and future. Whereas ten years ago these differences were being discussed and argued about in passionate terms, today we find them in closets well guarded by buzz words like professionalism, industry, capital cost allowances and comités de rapprochement.

In the midst of much social and political upheaval in Quebec, they were determined to create something different, something unique.

Le Syndicat national du cinéma was founded in 1970 by Michel Brault, a leading cinematographer, director, and apparently the patron saint of Quebec technicians. Prior to 1970, if a technician belonged to any union, he or she belonged to the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE), a large American union infamous for its closed doors and international presence. Brault, and others like him, knew what IATSE represented and in the midst of much social and political upheaval in Quebec, they were determined to create something different, something unique.

"We tried to adopt different rules and regulations for the union according to what we were doing here and according to what we wanted to do. We didn't want to be the IATSE of Quebec, we wanted to create a film industry here, one of our own. We believed that small is beautiful."

This statement, made by an original member of the SNC, is an understated but clear presentation of the Quebec technicians' early aspirations. The key phrases are: "one of our own" and "small is beautiful." The SNC realized that film-making was an industry, but they were interested in being active and vital partners in such an industry and in maintaining some control over what they were involved in producing.

Nobody could say it had been an easy victory.

Some years after 1970, Harry Gulkin, a producer who had often employed SNC technicians, reflected (in these same pages) on the uniqueness of the SNC and its sense of self:

"I cannot say for sure, but I do not believe that there exists anywhere else in the world a group of key technicians who insist upon reading a scenario before agreeing either to work on a film or to the conditions under which they will work on that particular film. In Quebec, an entire cadre of people exists whose commitment to its work is based not only on sustenance, professional and monetary, which it draws from it, but also on the imprint it can make upon its own audiences and upon the film audience of the world."

In concrete terms, the SNC's aim was twofold: to group technicians so that they could use their collective power to reach collective agreements with producers, rather than signing individual contracts with various producers for each film; and to impose a minimum standard for working conditions. It took from 1970 to 1976 to accomplish this task and when it was done, nobody could say it had been an easy victory.

The period from 1970 to 1976 was an active one in the Quebec film industry. Apart from work on documentaries, cinéma direct and features, many newly arrived technicians found themselves earning their livings through work on promotional films and television commercials. The concerns of the SNC had to be expanded to keep pace with the changing industry, and because of the

diversity, it became more important than ever to have a single agreement with the producers, who for similar reasons, had earlier formed their own association, L'Association des producteurs de films du Québec (APFQ).

Although the SNC had been demanding a single collective agreement since its inception, it wasn't until 1976 that serious negotiations with the APFQ began. In February of that year, the SNC sent its new regulations and demands to the producers. Along with their demands they also sent a deadline of April 1st. According to the current president of the APFQ, Claude Godbout, who was then a member of his association's executive committee, the producers had fully expected a lengthy negotiation process. Consequently, they were not prepared to accept what they considered to be an arbitrary use of the calendar by the SNC, and they outrightly refused to respect anything by the April 1st deadline. More importantly, the producers objected to the SNC's interpretation of what a technicians' union was, what the role of a technician was, and what they perceived as the usurpation of the responsibilities of the producer by the crew.

The NFB agreement was a frame-up and its acceptance by the SNC was fundamentally wrong.

During this same period, the advent of the Olympic Games brought a boomtown atmosphere to one particular area of film production in Quebec — the National Film Board. With the boom came the need for extra technicians, and the obvious place to look was the SNC. But because the union was already heavily involved in precedent-setting negotiations, the situation was a touchy one.

All NFB technicians, free-lance and staff, worked under a collective agreement between Le Syndicat général du cinéma et de la télévision — section Office national du film (SGCT-ONF) and the National Film Board. Hiring SNC members to work at the Board meant that these technicians automatically came under the rules and regulations of the SGCT. Thus, it was quite easy for the NFB to draft a letter stating that they agreed in principle with the SNC's demands, thereby freeing SNC technicians to go and work there, but *not* under the collective agreement they were demanding of the producers working in the private sector.

To many observers, the letter of acceptance from the Board was window dress-

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ing. Already troubled SNC meetings were now partially filled by technicians who were voting to accept or reject a contract, or to strike or not to strike even though the outcome wouldn't affect their work or their livelihoods.

In the words of a long-time member of the SNC who considers himself a "union man," the NFB agreement was a frame-up and its acceptance by the SNC was fundamentally wrong. Had there been work at the NFB for all the SNC technicians, it would have been one thing. Unfortunately, there were other members whose work was primarily in commercials, and for them, a vote to strike meant a loss of livelihood.

As negotiations became more and more involved, the rhetoric of the union leaders got stronger and stronger.

The April 1st deadline came and went, but by the middle of April negotiations began. By the middle of June talks had broken down completely. Louise Ranger was appointed by the producers' association to reopen negotiations and they began in earnest at the beginning of July. On the 15th of July, the SNC general assembly refused the amended version of the producers' offer and on July 26, union members voted to boycott productions.

In spite of the decisions being taken by the SNC general assemblies, all was not well within the union. The decisions of the majority were not favoured by all members, particularly the technicians who worked in the private sector. As negotiations became more and more involved, the rhetoric of the union leaders got stronger and stronger — to the point that some technicians wondered if they were settling into the winter of their discontent. There was a feeling that the issues the union had begun with were getting lost in the rhetoric of the struggle. The decision to boycott appeared too final, too self-defeating.

The decision to boycott appeared too final, too self-defeating.

Out of these doubts and fears arose a group of dissidents, largely made up of the technicians who were most affected by the boycott, whose work was primarily in commercials. In a letter addressed to the SNC executive, these dissidents asked that the boycott cease and that the union

effect a new negotiating position. It was a call for new tactics, but it also manifested a fundamental disagreement over what the union's role should be.

The dream of creating something small and beautiful was crumbling on every front.

In another letter, the dissidents disassociated themselves from the SNC and took their desires to the producers. Obviously, they were denounced by a general assembly of the SNC for their disloyalty, but the dye was cast. The dream of creating something small and beautiful was crumbling on every front and the harder the SNC fought to insure its goals, the worse things got: in August, the Supreme Court of Quebec issued an injunction against SNC officers and some members, disallowing them from disrupting commercials being shot.

By the end of August, with no end to the bitter turmoil in sight, an already complicated situation — dividing friends and sometimes even families — became ludicrous. The dissident SNC members formed their own association, L'Association des professionnels du cinéma (APCQ) — a name, which in retrospect, says a great deal about their sense of self and their *raison d'être*. They were 70 people who saw themselves as professional technicians and not political rhetoricians; and as such, they formed an association — not a union. The APCQ began negotiating with the producers immediately.

Clearly the formation of the APCQ was a major breakthrough that the producers could only welcome.

Clearly the formation of the APCQ was a major breakthrough that the producers could only welcome. Thinking back on all of this today, Claude Godbout isn't willing to accept that the SNC's internal problems and the breakaway of the dissidents established a climate that could lead to settlement: "The birth of the APCQ did not speed up the signing of the agreement. In fact, it probably prolonged negotiations. It created tensions, made work for us and it complicated things in the technical area." But this statement does not account for why some producers had been active supporters of the idea of a second union. "The executive of the association simply tried to remain calm during all of this, but I can't speak for all

the producers" (Godbout). In fact, certain producers had worked almost exclusively with the technicians who founded the APCQ and were in no way hesitant to do whatever was necessary to get back to work. Through the influence of these producers, the producers' association immediately recognized the APCQ and negotiations began. According to Godbout,

"We had no apprehensions about negotiating with the APCQ because we had recognized them based on the number of members they had. I think they had about 100 members but also there were producers who were working with them."

Despite the eagerness of both the APCQ and the APFQ, it took another four months for a satisfactory agreement to be reached. A first-ever collective agreement between film technicians and producers came into effect January 1, 1977 and would last until December 31, 1978. Subsequent to the agreement reached with the APCQ, the producers signed essentially the same contract with the SNC. Godbout has said: "I think in the end everybody was pleased in spite of the strike and the sub-division of the union because we arrived at an agreement that pleased everyone." Perhaps "relieved" might be a better word than "pleased." An SNC technician told me:

"There was a lot of bitterness left over and there still is because the people who were involved then are still involved. Remember, some producers boycotted SNC members — lots of technicians didn't work for eight months or a year. Some even boycotted SNC shoots."

The struggle had been won but there was ambivalence over just how sweet the victory was because of the wounds it had created. The period immediately following the signing of the collective agreements saw the two unions begin to institutionalize their differences, and ironically, it was the collective agreements which provided the impetus. Under both agreements, 1.5% of each technician's weekly salary would be paid to his or her union or association. Whereas prior to the collective agreement, the SNC and later the APCQ had been virtually unable to afford even a small office, now they were able to house themselves and hire secretaries and *agents d'affaires*: their own bureaucracies.

From the beginning of 1977 to the end of 1978, the two groups lived out the 'separate but equal' philosophy that the turmoil had produced. Certain developments then began to indicate that they were becoming even more separated. In



photo: SNC

During the boycott, producers hired buses to transport themselves, the director, crew and equipment across picket lines

**With more work than ever before
both unions were increasing
their membership.**

May of 1977, an SNC general assembly voted to become affiliated with the powerful, nationalistic Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU), solidifying their presence as, first and foremost, a Quebec union. For its part, the APCQ, several years later, became a member of the Federation of Trade Unions and Guilds, a Canadian umbrella organization which includes the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), the Directors' Guild of Canada (DGC), and the recently formed Association of Canadian Film Craftspeople (ACFC). This period also marked a significant rise in the number of feature films

shot in Montreal, thanks to the point system and capital cost allowance introduced by the federal government. With more work than ever before both unions were increasing their memberships.

In 1979, the producers, with their wallets full of tax shelter money, wanted a quick settlement. The first agreement had cost everyone a great deal, but it had established a framework for future negotiations and a *raison d'être* for many things. For the first time since 1976 the importance of strength and unity at the bargaining table became apparent; in an enlightened moment the SNC and the APCQ decided to try and negotiate together with the producers. But as soon as the dossiers were laid on the table, it became clear that the two unions had different priorities, and that the past had not yet been buried. Now, only eighteen months later, it is difficult to separate the

issues that prevented the two unions from negotiating together from the mutual sense of mistrust between the two.

**It became clear that the two unions
had different priorities, and that the
past had not yet been buried.**

According to the president of the APCQ, John Berrie, "... the SNC had a very different attitude." This is countered by the SNC claim that the APCQ was in cahoots with the producers' association from the outset — a theory that is lent some credence by the fact that the collective agreement was signed, on behalf of the producers, by Pierre Thibeault, who had been the APCQ's lawyer in 1976. Not mentioned in this theory, of course, was

that Thibeault had become a producer after ceasing to serve the APCQ as counsel.

As to the 'issues' which separated them, we have the collective agreement.

In effect, only four of the clauses of the separate agreements signed in 1979 differed. Of these, only two are in any way important, and their sense of importance depends directly on who analyzes them. The APCQ is very pleased that they managed to win a 'night differential' clause that earns their members time-and-a-half for night shooting. Apparently, their counterparts at the SNC did not want this clause, "... because it would have an adverse effect on Québécois filmmakers' ability to shoot at night." At least that's how the APCQ's John Berrie saw it. This is countered by Louise Surprenant, the recently elected president of the SNC, who said that in the process of negotiations something had to be let go of in order for something else to be won. She was not, however, sure of what it was that had been won.

The second important difference concerns what is commonly called the Priority Clause. In the APCQ agreement the clause reads as follows: "The Producer member or permit holder of the APCQ agrees to hire in priority in Quebec first, members of the APCQ and/or permit holders recognized as such by the APCQ." The SNC agreement reads: "The Producer, member or permit holder of the APFQ agrees to hire in priority in Quebec: 1. members of the SNC; and 2. permit holders recognized as such by the SNC." Not a difference that is likely to move mountains, and perhaps, to some, simply a question of semantics. But in the application of this clause the SNC is known to be more rigid. Given the fact that production this year is down over last year, the SNC clearly intends to test this clause through the grievance procedure.

From the APCQ's perspective, the SNC has a closed-shop mentality. According to the SNC, when a producer wants to hire permit holders (professionals from outside Quebec, or non-union people) they go with the APCQ because they can *s'arranger* with them. Yet having established their responses, both groups accept the necessity of both clauses, the SNC saying that they, too, will have a 'night differential' in their next contract, and the APCQ claiming that their priority clause is too general and that they "... require more control over permit holders because sometimes producers take advantage of it."

The real question is, do these two small but potentially important differences, along with the other philosophical dif-

ferences between the SNC and the APCQ put the producers in a position whereby they can profit from the choice of one union over the other? Claude Godbout thinks not. "You are speaking of two things which are probably very interesting to point out in an analysis of the agreements, but these make up one element in one hundred elements that enter into decisions when we're making a film."

**"We have a working agreement,
not a political marriage."**

And of the differences in general? "The producers do not profit from this situation — I can't say they lose — because they are the same agreements. A producer could refuse to work with one union or the other but he would make that decision based on certain advantages, not ideology. We have a working agreement, not a political marriage."

As would be expected, the unions don't agree — in fact, whether the question is asked of the executives or the members at large, the answer is always the same — we're playing into the producers' hands.

It has been said by more than one participant in all of this that the rupture was essentially a difference of opinion over tactics. The bitterness expressed by older members, however, tends to belie the point. The contract was won but paper never served to repair the crack, just to cover it up.

**"It's clear that at the base of all this
are two different philosophies."**

But if not tactics, then what? Ironically, of the three main parties to this affair, only Godbout of the producers' association brings up the word ideology. "The division of the SNC was certainly a product of an ideological division. I don't know how each group perceives itself, or the work of technicians, but it's clear that at the base of all this are two different philosophies."

To label the differences as either political, cultural, syndical, social, artistic, or any other single adjective, would be to miss the point entirely. To say that the SNC and the APCQ differ on all of these would, I think, be more accurate. Their ideological differences are manifested in their *raison d'être*, what they call themselves, their dealings with the producers, their associations with other organizations and, as small as they might be, their

collective agreements — or more importantly, how they *apply* those agreements.

Everyone recognizes that by having two unions, the technicians' power is diminished. Yet, the differences between the two seem significant enough to render any thought of unification inconceivable. Instead of seriously tackling the problem, the SNC and the APCQ have created bureaucracies as a substitute for democracy. In place of airing the issues and ideologies for the consideration by all the technicians, "comités de rapprochement" have been mandated to "work at unification." In this, there is no real sense of dealing with the past, just a sense of looking towards the future. Both executives aim to "work with determination," but slowly, step by step. The first steps are now being taken, the focus on points of common concern, with an eye to August, 1981, when the current agreements will be up.

**"This is a first step to see if we can
get along..."**

Explains SNC president, Louise Surprenant: "We both have comités de rapprochement. Ours decided to begin with certain problems we're having in applying the collective agreement. This is a first step to see if we can get along, if we can arrive at respecting our collective agreements (e.g. application of the priority clause). This would already be a big step of good faith and if it works, we can move on to the next step." All of which sounds reasonable enough until she adds, "When I meet people from the other union, I ask them if they want a reunion. 'Well, if you do, come back to the union.'" Her counterpart at the APCQ, John Berrie, feels differently. "The SNC represented people very well when there were just documentaries and cinéma vérité and all that, when there were smaller budgets and the situation was much harder than it is now. But I think we're better organized to work on big features now." Does that mean, then, that there can be no unification?

**"Two unions to represent
300 people is ridiculous."**

"We are interested in unification. Two unions to represent 300 people is ridiculous. I have spoken to a number a SNC members but I'm not sure whether the executive of the SNC is interested." In

spite of protestations to the contrary, one is prone to conclude that the flesh is able, but the spirits aren't very willing.

Lost in all of this are the union members themselves.

Lost in all of this are the union members themselves; particularly the new members of both unions. Given the fact that anyone starting in film can choose between the two, it might be logical to conclude that new members would have made carefully considered choices based on their knowledge and awareness of the two options. This is not the reality.

Generally, people are only superficially aware of both unions at the outset. The pattern followed by the majority is to start working as a permit holder, then make friends with other crew members in the business. After a few jobs, when it becomes financially advantageous to join a union (by not joining, a person remains a permit holder and as such, the mandatory union dues are higher), they join the same union as their co-workers or friends. Questions, should the new member be so inclined, come later. A young electrician's aid who joined the APCQ admitted, when he started, that he "just didn't know." And now? "To tell you the truth, I'm not at all certain I did the right thing. But there are problems with both." Many, however, don't even ask the questions.

As for the past, to the average newcomer, that's all it is — the past. Whatever great differences there once were, their attitude is echoed by Louise Surprenant, who described the events of 1976 as a "querelle de clocher — just personality conflicts." But apart from the *cômités*, there is little evidence to suggest that these personality conflicts have been resolved.

It has been four years since "la grande grève," as the veterans put it, and the dust has only begun to settle.

It has been four years since "la grande grève," as the veterans put it, and the dust has only begun to settle due to the amount of work that has been available. In a sense, the 'hold' button is on as people in Montreal's film community consider the future *en attendant* the governments. The membership of the SNC is approximately 450 with the APCQ's set at around 200. Each spring another new wave of eager film students enters the market, and already there are the beginnings of a work shortage.

It is perhaps important to note that it is only the Quebec unions that have a collective agreement in Canada. Elsewhere in Canada, technicians are still negotiating film by film. In Toronto, for example, it is only recently that local technicians have organized themselves into the aforementioned Association of Canadian Film Craftspeople (ACFC) to get out from under the imposing arm of IATSE. Ironically, their guiding light through all of this has been the APCQ. The irony is enhanced when it's realized that what is considered the right wing in Quebec is thought of as the left in Ontario.

It is difficult to examine the SNC and the APCQ without feeling that energy is being wasted while pettiness and insincerity flourish; unionism is being touted while individualism is institutionalized; and the collective good remains at best, an ideal, at worst, an anachronism.

In a healthy union the SNC and the APCQ would represent the left and the right.

In a healthy union the SNC and the APCQ would represent the left and the right, and the resulting dialectic would make for a better union. A union that could not rest on past laurels or future assurances, but one that would be actively involved in the dynamics of a changing scene. A union that would take its mandate seriously and represent its members' interests before its own.

Unions involved in the creative process are of a peculiar nature, given the inherent difficulties of unionizing individuals who

are, by definition, free-lancers. When movements become institutionalized and seek to perpetuate themselves, significant losses accompany the gains.

Finally, many people believe that cinema nourishes itself on crises, and if that's the case, then what we have here is the stuff of which movies are made.



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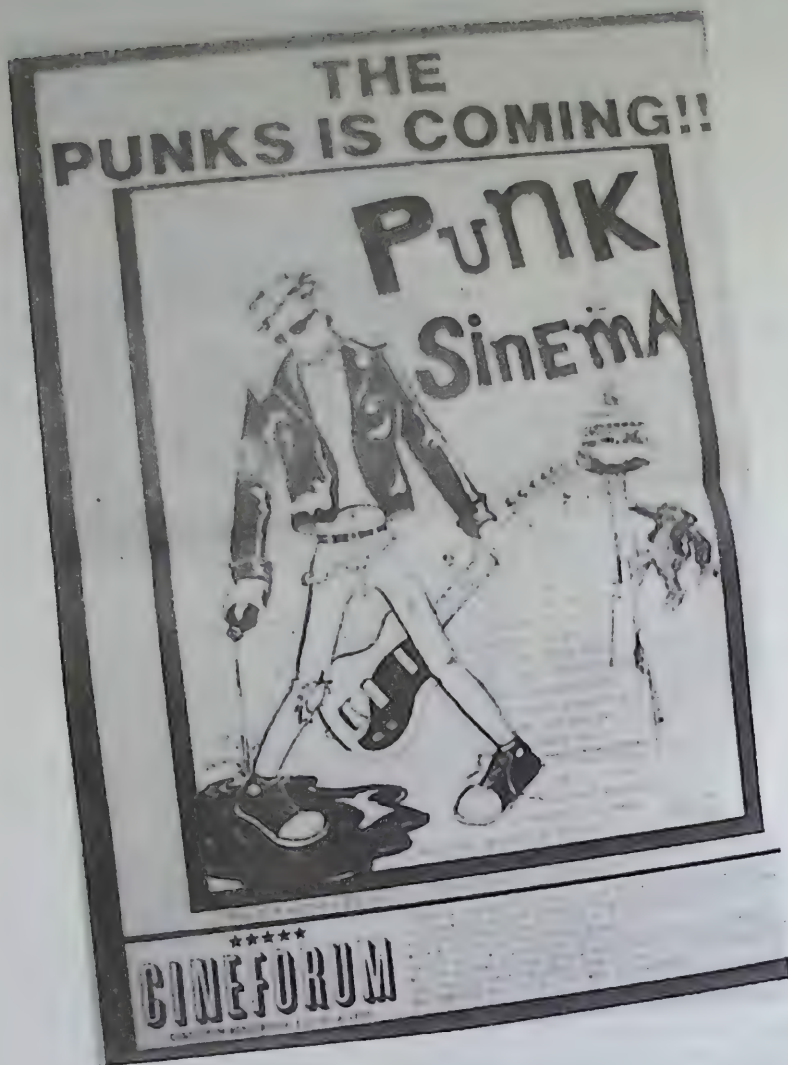
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pure
Punk!

by Scalpel Webster

fer punk lovers, Trontoers
furst-ever "punk sinema"
packidge was a blawkbuster —
a gutsee tribyoot to the
reel thing that paved
the way fer the noo wave
Cumin

"I mean, look at those people down there, man. They're walking this way and they're walking that way — they don't know where they're going anymore, they don't have any guidance... 'course, this punk rock thing is just a tip of the old iceberg — mate!" Dialogue from punk film — Ziggy.

The punk movement in Britain was originally spawned (skeptics might hazard, vomited up) in a climate of spiralling social dissent and despair. Urban blight and deprivation mirrored a democracy gone wrong, where everything was in a mess. Punk became an anthem, a battle-cry for those angry enough to contest the squalor of their lives and attempt, through music — punk rock music — to vent their frustrations at the status quo.

Replacing the old complacency there emerged (as Woodstock had ten years earlier) a radical return to pop culture. Punk rock suddenly became a barbed activist that angrily voiced the social ills of the nation and its people: for unless they escaped from the complacent disco "flash and trash" mentality of the 1970's, everyone was doomed to abysmal ruin.

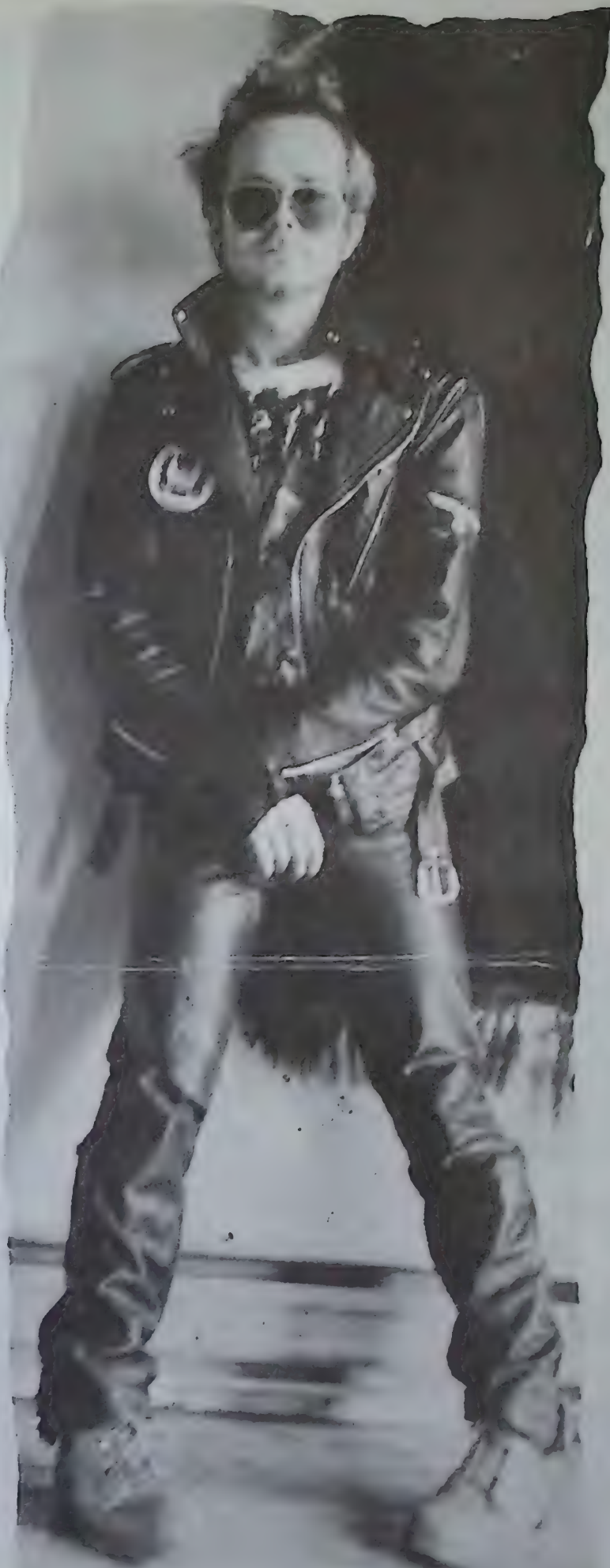
Out of this "renaissance" a school of filmmakers also emerged. Their intent was to orchestrate their individual styles with the essence of the movement.

Such was the scene in Canada when Reg Hartt, owner of Toronto's Cineforum, first became aware of "underground" punk films.

"I was approached," says Hartt, "by Toronto filmmaker, Colin Brunton, who showed me his film (*The Last Pogo*) and asked if it could be screened at Cineforum. I wanted to say yes, because I loved the film, but unfortunately, because of its length, (25 minutes) it was prohibitive. Faced with this dilemma, we bandied about the idea of 'Well, it might be impossible to show just one punk film, but what if we came up with a series of them?' Which is exactly what we did — and voila! Toronto's first Punk Cinema Package was born."

The "package" roared into Cineforum's diminutive auditorium on Mercer street in the spring of this year where it played to capacity houses for one month. It garnered praise from music and cinema patrons alike, who commented on the films' overall lack of pretense and hype. "It's as if," commented Hartt, "these films broach the gap between eclecticism and style." Fairly lofty credentials for a type of cinema which could just have easily been penned — because of the miniscule monies available — "The Cinema of Poverty."

Scalpel Webster is a free-lance writer in Toronto who is currently involved in the writing of a New Wave comedy show.



Proud to be Punk!

Cinema Canada/27

The most expensive picture cost less than \$10,000!

The program kicked off with Colin Brunton's *The Last Pogo*, a 16mm documentary that chronicles an array of original Toronto punk bands, assembled together for a farewell concert at the Horseshoe Tavern (then a bastion of punk) in December '78. The film's concert footage gives the impression that the bar was a cross between a booze-can and a riot. Everyone went crazy (or so it would seem) with a total disregard for physical, let alone mental, well-being. The bands (and the audience) performed with wild abandonment, making the concert footage both memorable and colorful. Interspersed with the music are snippets of animated conversations with real punks, pseudo punks, promoters and anyone else who lucked into getting their boat-race (face) in front of the camera — all of them commenting on what they think punk is (and isn't) all about. Finally, *The Last Pogo* succeeded in capturing that extremely tenuous quality of spirit, which was to eventually lay the foundation of today's "new wave".

Following *The Last Pogo* was Suzanne Naughton's *Mondo Punk*. "With *Mondo Punk*," declared Naughton, "I tried to capture that impossible-to-explain violence, frustration and subsequent anarchy in a film. It is everything most people never wanted to see about punk, 340 shots in six minutes, cut to

four, edited, classic music selections including Beethoven's 9th Symphony "Song of Joy", Ramone's "Blitzkrieg Bob", Sex Pistols "Anarchy in the U.K." and "God Save the Queen." Taking all of my elements which included photographs from magazines and record covers, party and live studio footage, pixillation, etc., I went onto an animation stand along with the actual 16mm workprint — some of which I rephotographed frame for frame (7 or 9 frames to one) — to optically slow the action down. I deliberately mixed negative and positive stocks, black-and-white and color film, (filmed off xerox 35mm contact sheets) color-filtered, black-and-white, monochromed color film to give the film a raw aggravating edge."

Although the film has received kudos practically everywhere that it has been screened (including the British Film Institute, where it opened as part of the feature "Punk in London" 1978 rock film retrospective) there have been some dissenters, including one of the judges at a Canadian Student Film Festival who felt that the film was as "objectionable and degenerate as the phenomenon it was studying!"

To sum up the motivation behind punk and all it angrily and, after a fashion, naively proclaimed, is at best difficult. Nonetheless, *Ziggy*, a 30-minute black-and-white film made by Bill

Kucheran and Bruce Pirrie, attempted to tackle these questions using a novel and at times quite brilliant approach. A satire, it chronicles the life of a recently graduated university student intent on securing a niche in showbiz. He is "befriended" by a somewhat shady talent agent who, after trying to set him up as a ventriloquist, decides instead to "create" a new persona for him — "Johnny Forklift," punk rock 'n' roll star. Forklift's fame is undermined when, due to his rise in popularity, the Federal Government tries to cajole him into working for them — as an ambassador of "worker rock." Rock for the people.

Director Bill Kucheran commented "I wanted the film to have an element of cynicism that was reflective of our culture — a Canadian equivalent of what was happening in England." Kucheran and Pirrie both agreed that at the time the picture was being made (it was begun at York University in '78) they were both influenced by German film director Werner Fassbinder and his ability to make, despite his incorporation of powerful foreign pop influences, an unabashedly German film.

Special mention should also be made of actors Pirrie and Cresswell for their realistic portrayal of the film's principal characters. "Those guys are hot!" remarked New York Production Manager,



Deborah "Rosie" Ross, after seeing the film: adding, "Tell those Canadians to nurture those guys, 'cause if they don't we'll snap 'em up in a second and it'll be their loss!"

In view of the enthusiastic response this punk film package received, it was ironic that none of the critics of the city's three major newspapers bothered to attend, though all had received invitations. Invariably, one must speculate as to who are the true harbingers of popular culture in Canada. The irony becomes more pointed when one considers that these same critics now cram their respective dailies with postpunk articles and the "new awareness."

As a retrospective on a movement Reg Hart's Punk Sinema was important because it gave audiences an insight, a visceral sense that something new, well perhaps not new, but at least different, was happening on the pop scene.

As to why these filmmakers chose to make these films in the first place, one might be hard pressed to come up with an overall definitive answer: save perhaps, that like all movements, theirs was spawned out of frustration, and sustained by an allegiance to a kindred spirit.



"Nazi Dog and the Viletones" says it all!



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BOOKSHELF

by george l. george

Aspects of Cinema

Three stimulating volumes discuss the role of imaginative delusions in films. Vivian Carol Sobchack's *The Limits of Infinity* deals with the nature and appeal of sci-fi movies and the evolution of the genre (Barnes \$14.50). In *The World of Fantasy Films*, Richard Meyers covers effectively 150 movies with occult, horror and sci-fi themes (Barnes \$17.50). Surrealist esthetics are tracked down in a surprisingly large number of Hollywood films in J.H. Matthews' informative text, *Surrealism and the American Feature Film* (G.K. Hall \$9.95).

Techniques used in blood-&-gore sequences of horror movies, involving scalping, decapitation, exploding heads and the like, are revealed by David Hutchison in *Special Effects* (Vol. 2), an aptly illustrated volume (Starlog \$7.95).

The story of Herbert Kalmus' lifelong efforts to bring color to the screen is engagingly narrated by Fred B. Basten in *Glorious Technicolor*, a superbly illustrated large format book that evokes artists and craftsmen who contributed to the success of a complex technique (Barnes \$30).

In *The Film Script*, Rolando Giustini submits a step-by-step approach to movie writing that follows successive stages of the process — concept, outline, treatment, screenplay, shooting script, and storyboard. Dealing with one script throughout the book, the method advocated appears effective and practical (Prentice-Hall \$12.95/6.95).

In the second edition of Halliwell's *Film Guide*, covering world movie production of the last 50 years, some 12,000 films are listed and evaluated by Leslie Halliwell with his customary expertise and erudition. Full credits, plot synopses, ratings and occasional quotes from reviews are included (Sterling \$36).

Differences in filmmaking procedures are underlined in three stimulating books. Charles Francisco's *You Must Remember This* describes the filming of *Casablanca*, a chaotic experience that unexpectedly resulted in a classical work (Prentice-Hall \$10). In *Resurrection in Cannes*, director Wes Hirschensohn bemoans the fate of *The Picasso Summer*, an ambitious

project enlisting Picasso's participation in a partly animated film based on his paintings (Barnes \$14.50). In *The Photographs of Chachaji*, director Ved Mehta describes the problems of filming his moving documentary *Poor Relations* in India (Oxford U. Press \$15.95).

Spotlight on Directors

Film directors have recently received a larger than usual share of attention on the part of book publishers. Leading the way is John Huston's absorbing memoir, *An Open Book* that tells his life story with zest and a flair for the dramatic. His filmmaking career is well covered, but his artistic and technical concepts could have been discussed at greater length (Knopf \$15).

Three veteran directors, George Cukor, Frank Capra and Clarence Brown, are examined by Allen Estrin in the sixth volume of *The Hollywood Professionals*. Each director's particular style, thematic preferences and psychological insights are considered in the light of specific films (Barnes \$12).

In *The Roman Polanski Story*, Thomas Kiernan offers a credible portrait of the gifted but deeply troubled man, obsessed with perfection in films and addicted to hedonistic behavior. Polanski's legal predicaments, stemming from his unbridled sexuality, are extensively discussed with extreme candor (Delilah/Grove \$12.95).

Published by G.K. Hall under the general editorship of Ronald Gottesman, the "Guides to References and Resources" series offers comprehensive studies of directorial achievements, containing fullfledged biographies, critical surveys, complete filmographies and other extensive data. They include *Jean-Luc Godard* by Julia Lesage (\$42.50), *Dziga Vertov* by Seth R. Feldman (\$24.95), *Sidney Lumet* by Stephen E. Bowles (\$15.50), *Roman Polanski* by Waxman & Bisplinghoff (\$15), *Walt Disney* by Cartley & Leebron (\$30), *Frederick Wiseman* by Liz Ellsworth (\$24.95), and *Artificially Arranged Scenes* — George Méliès by John Frazer (\$28).

Recent French Books

Moving tributes to a brilliant and controversial filmmaker, Pier Paolo Pasolini, are gathered by Laura Betti, his longtime companion, in *Pasolini: chronique judiciaire, persécution, exécution*. Contributed by his colleagues in the Italian art world, these translated essays describe Pasolini's tormented life, the political harrying by his rightwing opponents, the legal pretexts used to censor his work, and finally his establishment-inspired assassination disguised as an underworld hit (Seghers F50).

Maurice Bessy, a well-known figure in French film circles, evokes in his lively memoirs, *Les passagers du souvenir*, the celebrities he knew during his career as film producer, historian of the cinema, journalist, and finally, Delegate General to the Cannes Film Festival. Appearing in Bessy's delightful book are Greta Garbo, Brigitte Bardot, Charlie Chaplin, Jean Renoir, Orson Welles, D.W. Griffith, Julien Duvivier, Mack Sennett, Walt Disney, and many more in this enticing panorama of the film world as seen through a sensitive and intelligent personality (Albin Michel F45).

A broad and thoughtful survey edited by Max Tessier, *Le cinéma japonais au présent* examines, in penetrating detail, structure, personalities and works of the Japanese film industry in the last 20 years. Issued in the remarkably informative "Cinéma d'aujourd'hui" collection, the book probes the various dominating trends and the continuance of such genres as the romantic-pornographic movie that is fully integrated in the mainstream of production (Filméditons F33).

René Thévenet, a French film producer and specialist in motion picture economics, is the author, in collaboration with CPA Jean Roux, of *Industrie et commerce du film en France*. This is a highly professional overview of the French film industry, fully documented and thorough in its coverage, that considers in turn all the elements of production, distribution and exploitation, as well as government concern, legislation and taxation. An authoritative text by Thévenet who edits *FilmÉchange*, a quarterly devoted to the legal, economic and social aspects of the audio-visual market (Éd. Scientifiques et Juridiques F45).

EQUIPMENT NEWS

Camera Dollylite System

Camera Dollylite Systems, Inc., Lodi, California has introduced the Camera Dollylite in Canada. The lightweight fiberglass TV Dollylite instantly converts a room into a mini TV studio.

The unit accepts all standard black-and-white and color TV cameras up to 90 lbs., and all portable VTR units. This gives you a standardized production system that includes an 85-pound fiberglass dolly, tripod elevator and head and professional lighting on a light boom with only one cord outlet that accommodates all electrical requirements.

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space: 100" Width: 29" Depth: 39" Height: 96". Wattage: 1550 Ampers maximum: 15 Voltage: 115 Approximate weight: 85 lbs. VTR Mounting Shelf: Width: 29" Depth: 23 1/2".

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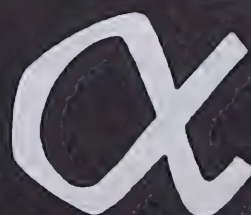
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FILM REVIEWS



Basking in the limelight before horror steals the show are **Prom Night's** king (Casey Stevens) and queen (Jamie Lee Curtis)

Paul Lynch's Prom Night

The following words, for those of you with a healthy distrust of journalism, have not been lifted out of context or warped in any way. They were meant to mean what they seem to mean.

"To do horror, you have to be a craftsman, not an artist. I'm the kind of guy who writes what people suggest. I'm a hired writer... Prom Night was Paul's idea, his package. He had the idea and I wrote the lines."

(Bill Gray, *Toronto Star*,
Sept 18, 1980)

"After making two human dramas that failed at the box office, I was left dying in the gutters of Toronto... One has to go for the market as it is. Prom Night is the Procter & Gamble method of making movies. I think it's a terrific marketing concept."

(Paul Lynch, in conversation)

"It's my first chance to 'play pretty'."

(Jamie Lee Curtis, the
Prom Night press kit)

OK, so **Prom Night** is pure product, created for the twin purposes of cash-in-hand and career advancement. That isn't, and shouldn't be, taken as grounds for derision. A lot of the world's best movies have been made in the commercial spirit — think of Hitchcock. But, being product, it must be considered in the same way as any other product: Does it work? Does it do what horror movies are supposed to do?

At their best, and it doesn't happen often, horror movies provide an empathic understanding of the subterranean twistings and pain of the soul, or an alternate, darker view of the human condition. Mostly, though, they're supposed to provide a lot of suspense and shocks.

Prom Night begins with four children playing "Killer," a slightly sadistic version of Hide and Seek, in an empty building. Outside, another girl passes by with her younger brother and sister. She goes off, younger sister goes inside to join the game, younger brother is left standing, fearful, outside.

Inside, the girl is caught and terrorized by the players. She falls to her death through a window and the players run away, vowing eternal silence.

Seven years later, the day of the prom dawns and each of the four gets an obscene, threatening phone call remind-

ing them of the death. All four attend the same high school, along with Kim (Jamie Lee Curtis), the dead girl's older sister. During the day, Nick (Casey Stevens), one of the four, transfers his affections from Wendy-the-Bitch (Eddie Benton), another of the four, to Kim. While they rehearse to be crowned king and queen of the prom, the Bitch and the Bully, suspended for groping Kim and punching Nick, plot to wreck the party.

Meanwhile, the cops are worried. The sexfiend who took the fall for the original death has escaped and is headed this way. They decide to put a couple of men on the prom.

The day proceeds, couples make dates and discuss sex. The prom begins and people slip away to have sex. They are stabbed by a masked lurker. Three of the four original players are killed, including the Bitch. The Bully sneaks backstage, to temporarily dispose of Nick. Then, as he stands in the shadows, waiting to appear as a self-crowned prom king, the killer, thinking him Nick, chops off his head.

Nick frees himself and fights with the killer, who drops his axe. Kim picks it up and brains him. He staggers outside to collapse and be unmasked.

It's a familiar plot, and the Murderous Masked Maniac is a familiar genre that has worked, more or less effectively, in numerous films from **Psycho** to **Halloween**. But it doesn't work here. It doesn't work because **Prom Night** is so badly crafted. Which is curious, given what Bill Gray said in the quote at the beginning, and because Paul Lynch, when he isn't talking about how the movie was aimed specifically at the 15 to 22-year-olds, is talking about how proud he is of the craftsmanship that went into **Prom Night**.

Maybe Lynch has a point, maybe he's talking about technical crafts, the nuts and bolts of getting an image on celluloid. On that level, **Prom Night** is well-crafted and some of that craft enhances the viewing. The decision to hold the final fight under a strobe light makes the scene far more interesting than it would otherwise have been. And director of photography Robert New does some interesting shooting through smeared and dirty broken glass, creating a very miasmatic, effective atmosphere.

It is here where the craftsmanship must

make it, or break it. Those early "glass" shots tie to the first death: the girl falls through a dirty window to land on broken glass. Later, the killer uses shards of glass on his first victims. Then, the "glass" idea is dropped, never to be seen again, as the killer picks up an axe to do his later work.

Now, a glass motif may be a small thing, of interest only to cinema fanatics and the terminally bored, but consider the killer poised with his axe. That axe has very specific work to do: it must knock the head clean off the Bully so it can go rolling down the aisle at just the right moment. No wonder they abandoned the glass. But, if they couldn't make it pay off, why didn't they scratch it from the script altogether?

Or consider the fact that it's the Bully getting his head chopped off, instead of Nick, the hero. We've known for about an hour that something horrible is going to come down that aisle — thanks to a big, big hint dropped early in the film — just when every kid at the prom is expecting the king and queen. And the large, obvious subplot about the prom's impending ruination has already been fully established. So what is the final outcome? The subplot has allowed the filmmakers to substitute a bad guy at the last moment. That way they can have their Grand Guignol scene without killing the hero.

Then there's the other subplot: the one about the escaped maniac whom everybody thinks has killed the girl. Everybody but the audience. The killer's identity is laid out so clearly in the opening sequence that anybody capable of peeling his own bananas knows, without even thinking, who's under that mask.

Not that it matters who's under the mask; for when you look back on the film, you realize that the killer's character was so blandly written that nothing in it even hints at a homicidal nature. This they try to make up for with a song over the end titles that's supposed to explain his inner pain — a song you can't hear for everybody leaving. This is craftsmanship?

Is it craftsmanship to design a heroine who contributes nothing to the development of the action, who is never the target of the menace, and who is blind to everything unusual happening until the last ten minutes? Something similar happens in *The Changeling*, another Bill Gray script. Although the George C. Scott character knows what's happening, and even helps it to happen, he has no part in the climax when it comes; he's merely an accidentally-endangered bystander.

Is it craftsmanship to cast Jamie Lee Curtis, with her almost supernatural stillness and haunted eyes, as a nice girl, and then make her seem even odder by surrounding her with arm-waving rubber-faces?

In a film with a useless, uninteresting heroine and pointless subplots, which relies solely on that masked maniac to amuse its audience, is it craftsmanship to delay the villain's entrance for well over an hour? And finally, when he does get to do his stuff, is it craftsmanship to undermine his effectiveness as a figure of terror by making him a bit of a klutz? Norman Bates in *Psycho* can get away with being a little klutzy, because it adds to his humanity. *Prom Night's* killer has no humanity to be added to, so his slippings and stumblings only destroy any chance

of his achieving the quality of the super-efficient, unstoppable killer of *Halloween*.

By the time the killer enters, his effectiveness or lack of it is a moot point. Any excitement in the murder scenes, which is where Lynch and company lavish all their care, is greeted with the same response usually reserved for a whole Cherry in a MacDonald's cherry turnover, "Oh wow, a cherry! Must've been an accident."

So *Prom Night* is a turkey; but right now, that matters no more than do these irate grumblings, because *Prom Night* is making money. Lots of it. (Check the figures for yourself.) But I doubt if it will be making money a year from now. *Psycho* is still raking it in; so are *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Carrie* and *Halloween*, all films with marked similarities to *Prom Night*. And marked differences. There's a moral here for filmmakers who would be comforted by residual cheques in their old ages: if you're going to give it to them, give it to them good!

Andrew Dowler

Prom Night

d. Paul Lynch p. Peter Simpson assoc. p. Richard Simpson sc. William Gray story Robert Guza Jr. or. mus. Carl Zittler, Paul Zaza d.o.p. Robert New p. man. Daniel Nyberg ed. Brian Ravok cfe exec. in charge p. Deanne Judson 1st a.d. Steve Wright asst. p. man. Maggie McMeekin loc. man. Aine (Onya) Furey cont. Sarah Grahame 2nd a.d. Lee Knippelberg 3rd a.d. Martha Hendricks driver capt./p.a. Don Baldassarra p. sec. Jody Morden p. acct. Stan David asst. to p. Linda Moyle d.(2nd unit) Dan Nyberg, Steve Wright film ed. Brian Ravok cfe, Ian McBride(asst.), Joan Giammarco(asst.), Bill Carter(asst.) sd. ed. Bruce Nyznik(superv.), Robin Leigh, Tony Currie(asst.) re.rec. Gary Bourgeois art d. Reuben Freed(pre-prod.) make-up Kathleen Mifsud hair Jenny Arbour ward. Kathleen Moyer, Constance Buck(asst.) key props. Marmie Charndoff asst. props Linda McClelland key set dress. Jo-Anne Chorney, Robin Collyer construc. man. Mark Molin carpenter Alan Sharpe story bd. Dave Ross focus puller Greg Farrow clapper loader

Marvin Midwicki gaf. Bob Gallant best boy Freider Hochheim key grip Carlo Compana asst. grip Dennis Thompson cam. (2nd unit) Henri Fiks cam. op. Robert Fresco focus puller Barry Stone clapper loader Christophe Bonnière sd. rec. Brian Day, Tom Mather(asst.) sp. efx. Al Cotter prosthetics Warren Keillor stunt co-ord. Terry Martin stunts Terry Martin, Randy Kamula, Karen Pike, Dwayne McLean or. disco musc. Paul Zaza l.p. Leslie Nielsen, Jamie Lee Curtis, Casey Stevens, Eddie Benton, Antoinette Bower, Michael Tough, Robert Silverman, Pita Oliver, David Mucci, Jeff Win-cott, Marybeth Rubins, George Touliatos, Melanie Morse MacQuarrie, David Gardner, Joy Thompson, Sheldon Rybowski, Rob Gar- rison, David Bolt, Beth Amos, Sonia Zimmer, Sylvia Martin, Liz Stalker-Mason, Pam Henry, Ardon Bess, Lee Wildgen l.p. (children) Brock Simpson, Debbie Greenfield, Tammy Bourne, Dean Bosacki, Leslie Scott, Karen Forbes, Joyce Kite casting Karen Hazzard (Toronto), Sheila Manning(L.A.) pub. Elizabeth Blomme p.c. A Simcom Production (1979) col. 35mm running time 91 min. dist. Astral Films (Canada), Avco Embassy Pictures Corp. (U.S.A.).



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Donning the costume of each of his victims, *Terror Train*'s crazed killer means business

Roger Spottiswoode's *Terror Train*

One of the most memorable sketches in the checkered history of *Saturday Night Live* was Anthony Perkins' commercial for "The Norman Bates School of Motel Management," with its multiple-choice questions designed to test one's fitness for a career in motel work: "If an attractive female guest loses the key to her room, should you a) Give her the spare key b) Let her in with the pass key c) Hack her to death with a kitchen knife."

If only we had known then that option (c) would become a whole sub-genre of the horror film, one that we could name after the daughter of the woman Norman Bates hacked to death with a kitchen knife twenty long years ago.

Terror Train is the latest example of the Jamie Lee Curtis film. Structurally, the Jamie Lee Curtis film works this way. 1) A deranged killer returns to either avenge a wrong or continue an interrupted killing spree. 2) He begins to track and kill a group of young people, generally women, whom he associates with his compulsion. 3) No one is left but the heroine, who pluckily but clumsily fights

off his depredations until she either kills him or is rescued by an aging character actor.

We can name this genre after the singularly sullen Miss Curtis because she has starred in three of them, including the genre's classic, *Halloween*. The leading character, however, can be played high-budget (Faye Dunaway in *Eyes of Laura Mars*), low-budget (Olivia Hussey in *Black Christmas*), or no-budget (Caitlin

O'Heaney in *He Knows You're Alone*). Elements of the genre, an odd mating of *Psycho* with *And Then There Were None*, turn up all over the place, including *Murder By Death*, *The Omen*, *The Brood*, *Dirty Harry*, etc., but certain elements remain consistent. The killer is usually nameless and faceless, the events take place in isolation — as on the train in *Terror Train*, in the deserted small town of *Halloween* or in the sorority house during the holidays in *Black Christmas* — and the heroine is unfailingly an attractive young woman who is pursued through strange dark places (lest we forget, Jane Austen parodied that little number in *Northanger Abbey*, published in 1803).

Thus, when I planted myself, fully equipped with popcorn, coke and notepad, for a screening of *Terror Train*, I was prepared for minimal plot, bad acting, and at least forty minutes of gliding subjective camera work — a now-tired element of cinematic grammar that should have been retired the day John Carpenter wrapped *Halloween*: In other words, I was ready to screen a film like *Prom Night*, or *He Knows You're Alone* (an MGM release that not only cops most of *Halloween*, but plagiarizes *The Silent Partner*'s most electrifying *frisson*, the severed head in the aquarium).

Fortunately, *Terror Train* is much better than that. Not great, but acceptable. Director Roger Spottiswoode, previously known for his editorial work for Peckinpah, Walter Hill and Karel Reisz, has avoided the stylistic cliché by having the camera stay still, a remarkable decision

Terror Train

d. Roger Spottiswoode p. Harold Greenberg sc. T.Y. Drake exec.p. Harold Greenberg and Lamar Card mus. comp. John Mills-Cockell d.o.p. John Alcott p. design. Glenn Bydwell ed. Anne Hendersbn, Susan Shanks (asst.) p. exec. Don Carmody dialog. co-ord. Caryl Wickman art d. Guy Comtois cam. op. James Devis cost. design. Penny Hadfield p. man. William Zborowsky cont. Brigitte Germain a.d. Ray Sager (1st), David Macleod (2nd), Blair Roth (3rd) focus puller Paul Gravel gaf. Lou Bogue clapper loader Jonathan Goodwill stills Alan Carruthers addit. ph. René Verzier, Al Smith, Peter Benison prop. mas. Maurice Leblanc, Jean-Pierre Laurendeau (asst.) set dress. Jenepher Hooper ward. Susan Hall asst. to p. design. Rosanne Moss seamstress Lise Pharand casting Ingrid Fischer, Anna St. Johns sd. mix. Bo Harwood boom Jean-Marc Magnan re-rec. mix. Dave Appleby, Dino Pigat sd. efx. ed. Fred Brennan, Michael O'Farrell dialog. ed. Sharon Lackie, Ellen Adams mus. ed. Kirk Hawkes asst. sd. ed. Helen Watson

Michael Rea unit co-ord. Ginette Hardy p. sec. Kathy Flynn train co-ord. Paul Wisenthal loc. man. Paul Lamontagne, François Leclerc (asst.) asst. to p. Victoria Barney exec. p. asst. Louis Massicotte p. acct. Lucie Drolet, Paule Clark (asst.) p.a. Sandy Rochester make-up Joan Isaacson, Michele Burke, Louise Mignault Rundel (asst.) spec. make-up consult. Alan Friedman hair Huguette Roy best boy Normand Foy elec. Yves Tessier key grip Don Caulfield, Pierre Lapointe (asst.) grip Jerome South spec. efx. Josef Elsner draftsman Raymond Larose trainee Marie-Renée Collette driver capt. Michel Siry drivers Michael Bernardelli, Donna Noonan, Vicki Frodsham, Roy Perryon, Steve Wilkins l.p. Ben Johnson, Jamie Lee Curtis, hair Bochner, David Cooperfield, Derek Mackinnon, Sandee Currie, Timothy Webber, Anthony Sherwood, Howard Busgang, Steve Michaels, Greg Swanson, D.D. Winters, Joy Boushel, Victor Knight, Don Lamoureux, Charles Biddles, Sr., Elizabeth Cholette, Thomas Haverstock, Peter Feingold, Richard Weinstein, John Busby, Roland Nincheri, Andrea Kenyon, Elaine Lakeman, Gerald Eastman, Charles Biddles, Jr., Nadia Rona p.c. Triple T Productions (Astral) Ltd. 1979 running time 96 min. dist. Astral Films Ltd.

when you consider the possibilities offered by all those corridors. Perhaps they were using a camera too large to negotiate the space, or maybe director of photography John Alcott was still suffering from motion sickness after all the vertiginous, swooping movement in his last film, *The Shining*.

The story is pretty simple, despite a couple of truly bizarre plot twists. In their first year at college, the sweethearts of Sigma Phi played a rather gruesome sexual joke on a fellow freshman. Now, at their graduation party aboard an excursion train, the conspirators who planned the joke begin to be murdered by someone lurking on the train. Is it the Mephistophelean magician (a type-cast David Copperfield), or is he yet another red-herring in a plot that reeks of that fish.

While the film is well-shot and exceptionally edited (by Anne Henderson), the acting is nothing special. Ben Johnson, as the conductor, is himself, and thus is pleasant. Jamie Lee Curtis, the Hollywood child with her mother's eyes and her father's jaw, is again allowed to exploit her marked ability to scream. Hart Bochner (son of Lloyd) reprises his smirking big-man-on-campus role from *Breaking Away*, but seldom seems intelligent enough to play an incipient medical student.

Terror Train is certainly a well-packaged little thriller, and, given its saturated advertising budget, it will probably make a bundle for the boys at Astral. But it is really yet another example of the bareness of a genre's cupboard. Aside from *Halloween*, an extraordinarily rigorous and controlled formal exercise in point-of-view, none of the best horror films of recent years have had anything to do with the "hack'em to death with the kitchen knife" school of sadism. Rather, they have dealt with the body's rebellion against repression (Cronenberg's films), portrayed the imminent detonation of the nuclear family at ground zero (*Carrie*, *The Shining*), or attempted to project a legitimately surreal, dream-state (*Phantasm*).

Terror Train is, to use that most damning of critical phrases, "good of its kind." What is truly unfortunate is that this kind of genre gives us thrills by promising the brutal murder of defenseless young women. (Note Robin Wood's comments on *Psycho*'s shower scene as surrogate rape.) It is a dead-end genre, which possesses neither honour nor value, and offers little possibility for growth.

John G. Harkness

Paule Baillargeon/ Frédérique Collin's *La cuisine rouge*

Plot, character development, dramatic tension and other devices which usually give film viewers something on which to hang their hats are all missing from this avant-garde Quebec film, whose technical adequacy is not enough to redeem it as a valid cinematographic product.

La cuisine rouge is meant to depict the social anarchy which has set in since women have become aware of their oppression. However, rather than dramatize the experience of one or two individuals, the film has chosen to represent collectively the many faces of woman — in all her anguish and contradictions — in this era of transition to who-knows-what. However, for a number of reasons, it fails to engage our emotions and comes off more as an abstract political tract than anything else.

The film opens in a rather deceptive traditional manner. A young couple has just tied the knot at Montreal's Palais de Justice and is on its way, with the bride's parents to her place of work where the wedding reception is to take place. They unload at an unlikely spot — a rather seedy bar-cum-strip joint, only to find the remains of the previous night's business untouched. In short, a mess, and nowhere any sight of imminent festivities.

The bride repairs hastily to the kitchen, where she finds her colleagues in a state of emotional disarray equal to the physical disarray of the premises: having refused to carry out their usual duties, they find themselves totally at loose ends. What ensues is an essentially plotless, tedious acting out of their confusion. The scene switches occasionally from kitchen to back yard, to bar, where a group of men, disoriented by the women's rebellion, eventually "examine" their own positions in a series of incredibly simplistic harangues reminiscent of sometime-Godard.

The trouble with all this delirium — rendered with minimal camera move-



Hardly enthusiastic about the imminent wedding reception are *La cuisine rouge*'s Pierre Curzi (left), Bertrand Carrière and Jean-Pierre Saulnier

photo: Camille Maheux

FILM REVIEWS

ment — is that it fails to catalyze into anything greater than merely the sum of its parts. The film's tenacious collective stance and its refusal to resort to "obvious" narrative artifice, result — paradoxically — in a distinctly artificial and fragmented product, which *might* have fared somewhat better as theatre, where tradition and subsequent audience expectation allow for greater experimentation.

Also, the film's sets, as well as its best moment — a patently absurd conversation between the bride's mother and the groom on the relative merits of 14, 18 and 22-karat gold jewellery — are in fact, highly theatrical in nature; as is the scene in which an unemployed Spanish immigrant recounts his tale of woe to the women.

However, it is doubtful that this production would have succeeded fully even as theatre. Avant-garde art, since it resorts to none of the traditional narrative devices used to engage the viewer's attention, must force him to participate in some other way — by mystifying him, making him uncomfortable, curious or what-have-you. *La cuisine rouge* suffers from a sustained inability to move us, except in rare, isolated moments.

Lucienne Kroha



Holding on for dear life? Suzanne's Jennifer Dale and Winston Rekert

La cuisine rouge

d./sc. Paule Baillargeon, Frédérique Collin
exec. p. Ballon Blanc **assoc. p.** Claude Desgagné, Renée Roy **p. asst.** Denis Hamel **p. sec.** Lucie d'Amour, Lise Roy, Colette Martin, Manon Lefebvre **a.d.** Lise Abastado, Claire Wojas **p. man.** Marie-Andrée Brouillard, Jacques Laliberté **d.o.p.** Jean-Charles Tremblay **asst. cam.** Pierre Duceppe (1st), Camille Maheux (2nd) **ed.** Babalou Hamelin, Marie Hamelin (asst.) **sync.** Sophie Bissonette **sd. ed.** Claude Langlois **sd.** Serge Beauchemin, Jacques Blain, Esther Auger **art d.** Réal Ouellette **props** Chantal Pépin, Gilles Ducas (asst.), Michel Lussier (asst.) **make-up** Dale Turgeon, Micheline Foissy **ward.** Louise Jobin, Lise Bédard **elec.** Normand Viau, Daniel Chrétien **machinists** Emmanuel Lépine, Pierre Charpentier, Patrice Bengle, Nathalie Moliavko-Visotsky **cont.** Marie La Haye **stills** Camille Maheux **mus.** Yves Laferrière **musicians** Richard Beaudet, Richard Perrotte, Gilles Beaudoin, Yves Laferrière, Monique Fauteux **boom** Gilles Perrotte **sd. mix.** Michel Descombes **craftservice** Albanie Morin, Jacques Leduc (asst.) **i.p.** Michèle Mercure, Han Masson, Catherine Brunelle, Marie Ouellet, Monique Mercure, Valérie Desjole, Claude Maher, Gilles Renaud, Guy Thauvette, Raymond Cloutier, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Pierre Curzi, Bertrand Carrière, Claude Laroche, Ghyslaine Tremblay **p.c.** Les Films Anastasie Inc. (1979) **col.** 16mm **running time** 82 min. **d1st.** Les Films du Crépuscule.

Robin Spry's Suzanne

After the disheartening premiere of *Suzanne* at Toronto's Festival of Festivals last month, Robin Spry withdrew his film and made several changes to it before it was released commercially; the result is a better film, although five minutes here and there cannot transform an ugly duckling into a swan. It is nonetheless, for reasons I hope to make clear, an estimable film, and one wonders whether the sharp criticism of it is now justified.

The Canadian imagination has always had a self-conscious predilection for ideas. Maybe in our early factionalism ideas were weapons to defeat our opponents, religious or cultural; maybe ideas gave us a sense of civilization in our harsh surroundings. But rarely were they absorbed into the imaginative experience

of the country. *Suzanne* fairly begs to engage us with serious ideas. The opening scene — the disruption by political agitators of a Corpus Christi procession — is splendid and has been appropriately praised; the clash of traditional and modern forces in Quebec in the fifties is, we now realize, one of Canada's crucial conflicts. And *Suzanne*, the young girl who is the film's subject, ponders her own dual — French and English — background "There must be more to me than being split in two, never knowing who I am." The sectarian differences between French and English, Catholic and Protestant, wealthy and poor, figure in the movie as they did in our history. But the ideas do not mesh with the plot, and they are left dangling as the movie goes its predictable way.

Predictable, because Spry and Ronald Sutherland (who wrote the screenplay with Spry) are reduced to using tired, time-worn plot and characterization. Every figure is a walking stereotype, and as the movie progresses one starts checking off the dreary familiarities: Presbyter-

rian repression, French-Canadian liveliness (which, in the person of Suzanne's mother, is killed; I leave off drawing any conclusions from that), rape, abortion, the aggressive shallowness of wealth. It is, as Marc Gervais pointed out in last month's *Cinema Canada*, vulgar melodrama.

Yet why am I not irritated with this film? Improvements in sound and overall tightness no doubt play a part. But something else is going on here that interests me, something I can only call a considered sense of time and place. Beneath the cliché and predictability is an engaging aliveness to environment. The dance bandstand on the beach, the interiors of the houses, the drab beauty of the Montreal streets, each scene is scrupulously right, and each scene seems to testify to Canada's distinctness. I recall the excitement I felt, in the opening scene of **Duddy Kravitz**, seeing Montreal portrayed in a slick, confident movie — the backstreets and iron staircases were instantly recognizable as Canadian. We have always been hungry to know what has shaped us, what our cities looked like in times past, what life was like. This is no doubt a symptom of our lack of self-confidence. But it is also due, I suspect, to a certain admission of social realities. The narcissistic claustrophobia of a movie like **Kramer vs. Kramer**, wholly encased in the private world, is very far from Spry's film. In **Suzanne**, the public realm is always at the edge of the individual's life, whether it is the police (who are portrayed, tellingly, as nice guys), or society barriers, or the graveyard, the final public domain. We are not so unique and wonderful but are products of our time and place, Spry seems to be saying, and if he goes too far in reducing personality to stereotype, I prefer that excess to the hot-house inflation of the individual in **Kramer vs. Kramer**.

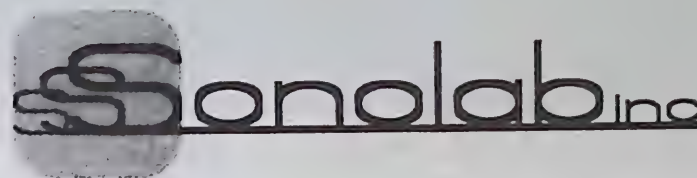
Spry's camera work is unobtrusive and suited to his purpose. Moods or states of mind are not portrayed cinematically so much as the felt actuality of the city. The streets gain a kind of luminousness through the camera's eye and might be termed a quietly active background.

I admire **Suzanne** for its earnest attempt to grapple with the Canadian experience. Like Hugh MacLennan's novels

(also rife with large ideas, never quite digested), the film brings to the fore ideas that have shaped and are shaping us. That effort alone does not produce art but it fosters the environment — of self-familiarity, perhaps — where art is possible. Towards the end of **Suzanne**, Nicky, the local no-good, talks of running away to California. But Suzanne has no desire to go, and judging by the happy life she makes for herself we can see why.

Hers is a quiet assurance that the Canadian *here*, regardless of repression and narrowness, and religious and cultural turmoil, is worthy of cultivation. That this assurance is possible is the film's sanguine message. That **Suzanne** never quite brings together ideas and experience puts the truth of the message, regretfully, in some doubt.

Peter Sanders



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(Readers are referred to *Cinema Canada* no. 69 (Oct/Nov.), for the credits for **Suzanne**, which were published with Marc Gervais' review of the first version of the film.)

SHORT FILM REVIEWS



Technology can be beautiful, as *The Challenger* proves

The Challenger: An Industrial Romance

d./p. Stephen Low co-d. Michael Rubbo, Roger Hart exec. p. Roman Kroiter assoc. p. Michael Rubbo, Harry Gulkin ed. Roger Hart sc./narr. Stephen Low d.o.p. Andreas Poulsson sd. rec. Bev Davidson sd. ed. Ken Page re-rec. Hans-Peter Strobl p.c. National Film Board of Canada (1980), in co-operation with the Government of Canada Industry Trade and Commerce col. 16mm running time 57 min. 23 sec. dist. National Film Board.

Although it was probably not Montreal director Stephen Low's conscious intention with *The Challenger: An Industrial Romance*, he has succeeded in making a film which proudly lives up to the National Film Board's original mandate to produce films which instill in Canadians a sense of pride in belonging to Canada. But *The Challenger* accomplishes this sincerely, without affectation and with only subtle propaganda. The film tells a Canadian success story — a gamble which paid off — and goes a long way toward relieving what Canadair chief Fred Kearns calls the inherent Canadian inferiority complex.

The Challenger is a documentary which explores Canadair's great corporate gamble to be number one in the executive jet market. With unwavering optimism and faith, the company embarked upon an industrial adventure which could either pull them back from the brink of insolvency or become "the most embarrassing industrial turkey in Canadian history."

The Challenger executive jet was a \$200 million investment which eventually proved to be "the greatest idea ever built

with Canadian dollars." Developed from an original idea conceived by Bill Lear of Lear Jet fame, the Challenger promised to fly faster on less fuel and be more comfortable than any of its competitors. The remarkable thing about the Challenger is that in spite of the fact that it was a mere idea on paper for many years, it nevertheless sold faster than the extant jets of its competitors.

Low conceived the idea of making a film about the Challenger after the project was well underway at Canadair. With a guarantee of the firm's full cooperation, he sold the NFB on the idea. The film took two years to shoot and another six months in the editing. Low conceded that the proximity of the Canadair plant to the NFB allowed him a broader perspective on the project's progress. He was informed of the events as they developed at Canadair and could jump in a vehicle with his equipment and crew and be just down the road on location in a matter of a few minutes.

The thoroughness which this accessibility afforded is apparent in the film. Virtually every aspect of the jet's development — from design stage through high finance funding, politics, aeronautical engineering, corporate meetings and international salesmanship — is covered as the film cross-cuts from one development to another. And out of this action emerges a mounting tension of suspense as the plane evolves from idea to design to fact and as credibility builds against the doubt projected by competitors. All this time the Challenger is gradually emerging as a personality. We first hear of it as an idea discussed by Bill Lear and Fred Kearns.

We then see it as a design on paper, as a cardboard mock-up, as parts of the whole on engineers' drafting tables, as pieces in assembly plants. Piece by piece it is assembled in a hangar. The sounds of gently whistling wind and eerily plucked strings are the sounds of distilled concentration as the silent workers bend to their tasks.

The camera tentatively approaches the dark, silent, and as yet foetus-like aircraft with a circular movement suggesting an awed and reverential distance. Mysterious, spacey music gives us the feeling we are in the presence of some as yet undefined personality waiting to be born.

Low utilizes his keen filmmaker's sense in structuring his shots so that they appear to anthropomorphise the machine. The Challenger comes to life as we see a rear shot of the plane in the dark depths of the hangar, awaiting its debut into the world. As it finally rolls out, sleek and shining, into the sunshine and the fanfare of trumpets and a cheering crowd, the camera dollies after it. We then have an outside shot of its nose emerging from the hangar, a high angle of its entire body, then some close-ups. The editing generates a feeling of excited curiosity and exultant discovery.

The film's heroes are there to welcome the Challenger's unveiling: Jean Chrétien, then Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce who had the optimistic foresight to convince the Federal Government to loan millions to the project; Canadair President Fred Kearns, the calm and powerful ex-Spitfire flyer who pushed the idea from conception to birth; Harry Halton, the company's chief design engineer who gambled with his own life as he supervised the complicated construction while confined to a wheelchair. These three men along with the American super-salesman Barry Smith, who executed a brilliant and effective sales campaign of "humble arrogance," are, aside from the Challenger itself, the film's central characters.

Low both wrote and narrated the script. It is a well-written script, but the narration, beginning in a somewhat low-keyed monotone, detracts from the exciting content. However, the unemphatic narration does add a personal and sincere touch.

The Challenger was recently awarded the Silver Award at the San Francisco Film Festival and was voted Best of Category winner in Commercial Sales and Public Relations.

Lyn Martin

The Inheritance

d./sc. John Kramer nar. Donald Brittain ed. John Kramer, Richard Todd d.o.p. Pierre Letarte p.a./asst.ed. Rita Roys d.rec. Richard Besse sd.ed. André Galbrand mus.ed. Don Douglas sd.re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl asoc.p. Mark Zannis p. Adam Symansky exec.p. Adam Symansky exec.p. Peter Katadotis stills Courtesy of the Centre de documentation, La Presse Ltée col. 16 mm running time 58 min. 18 sec. dist. National Film Board of Canada

With all the hoopla about a new constitution, federal-provincial relations, and national heroes and villains, **The Inheritance** makes a timely appearance to offer English Canada a retrospective focus on the Quebec question.

The National Film Board's John Kramer wrote and directed this one-hour documentary about the late Quebec Premier, Daniel Johnson, and the political legacy he left to his two sons. They are members of politically opposite parties. Was it a patrimonial bequest of ambivalence? Or do they personify the essence of Quebec politics? Theirs is an inheritance which may not be spent.

This ambivalence is what Kramer tries to underscore in his depiction of Johnson — a benevolent, Union Nationale, traditionalist conservative, who embraced both Maurice Duplessis' old guard elite and a new generation of Quebec nationalists. In conducting this balancing act, Johnson appears less a director of Quebec nationalism than a politician trying to swim to the crest of its wave and remain afloat.

The truism running through the film is that, in politics, the name of the game is power first, ideology second. In the early '60s Johnson tried and failed to become premier by promising to bring back the good old days and by Red-baiting Liberal opponents like René Lévesque. Trying another tack, he jumped on the nationalist bandwagon and attempted to win over the young nationalists who were abandoning Liberal Premier Lesage. Johnson found the slogan "Equality or Independence" covered all his bases. Quebec was already *une nation*, a word that has never translated well in English Canada.

Footage of the first constitutional conference in 1968 makes the most recent exercise seem like a pastiche. Then, Prime Minister Pearson, with Justice Minister Trudeau at his elbow, warned darkly that failure would mean the failure of Confederation. A confident

Trudeau, anxious to enshrine language rights, remarked prophetically that if Johnson believed the door had been closed on Quebec, it would be opened and closed in the future, depending on the mood of the day. He closed it on special status and Johnson was left with the ominous half of his slogan. An owlish Claude Ryan (whose own newspaper was then arguing for special status) denounced Trudeau's simplistic advice about linguistic equality. In 1980, Ryan sounds like Johnson did then, Levesque, like Ryan then, and Trudeau is still fiddling the same federalist tune.

But politics is not known for consistency. Rather like Plato's shadows on the cave walls, there are forces which undulate, focus momentarily, then change appearance. This is what is difficult to portray, especially in a com-

pilation film where the director has little control over footage which others have shot. All the more remarkable has been Kramer's success in manipulating stock footage to encapsulate history. This film appeals to both the general and the specialist audience, and in the best of the documentary tradition should spark discussion and debate.

Intercut with the historical footage are interviews with the sons. Daniel Jr., suspicious of people's motives, admits that a politician's children learn to hide their personalities and feelings. He describes it as a self-imposed shell. The audience can only wonder why he chose the Liberal Party, and how he became vice-president of Power Corporation, symbol of order, progress and modern Quebec capitalism. A glimpse of him as father and hockey coach to his



Quebec's former Premier Daniel Johnson in a jubilant pose before a poster of Maurice Duplessis.

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SHORT FILM REVIEWS

own son fails to reveal his emotive qualities.

Pierre-Marc is also an enigma, though his articulation of "fraternity, a human dimension to being a politician — something joyous about it," comes very close to revealing an aspect of Parti Québécois nationalism that English Canada has difficulty understanding. He, too, says nothing about his decision to enter then leave medicine, and nothing about his own family life. He confines personality and actions to political statements about Quebec. To die in politics as his father did is a noble thing. One wishes there were more probing questions about father-son and brotherly relations.

But he and Daniel Jr. are directing the camera, not Kramer; and in political documentary one must take what the subject chooses to reveal. Because a sophisticated media presence is a prerequisite for contemporary politicians, there are no surprise revelations before the camera's innocent eye. Having revealed little of themselves, the brothers are satisfied with the film.

Has Kramer made too much of the convenient dichotomy between the Johnson brothers and the peculiar nature of Quebec politics? Quebec's ambivalence and contradictory inner life do not effect the longstanding tug of war between the province and the federal power. The film's hindsight provokes at least two questions: Will not a querulous Quebec probably always need Ottawa to berate? Is not cultural sovereignty what this whole period in our history is about?

The Inheritance has much to offer English Canada. Word has it that the CBC brass have not yet agreed to show the film nationally. They claim there is not enough knowledge of Daniel Johnson or his sons, outside of Quebec, for the film to be of national interest. Does civil service muffledom believe that keeping Canada parochial is good? And is that standing on guard for the true national identity? Why should Canadians offer sops and soaps to maintain mythical number? Why should Canadians not be talked up to and exposed to many interpretations of their country's recent past? It was Cicero who said in effect that to remain ignorant of things past is to remain a child. Some CBC executives might contemplate Cicero before convening programming meetings.

Gary Evans

The Music Box Dancer

p. Peter Kiviloo d. Peter Kiviloo sc. Peter Kiviloo, Tina Soomet ed. Tina Soomet d.o.p. Alar Kiviloo sd. Ao Loo mus. Frank Mills, Michael Root grip Lembitu Ristsoo l.p. Marie Fennell, Ray Conn col. 16mm running time 20 min. p.c. Cinex Films.

Music Box Dancer is a short drama produced and directed by Peter Kiviloo which deals in a touching and intelligent way with the effect of divorce on the relationship between a parent and a child who have become separated from each other.

The story is about the reunion of nine-year-old Rachel, who lives in Toronto, with her father who lives in England. For most of the film we hear and see from Rachel's point of view. Rachel begins her narration, as most nine-year-olds would, with hopes and wishes about her father that are completely loving and enthusiastic, but which are also, sadly, not very realistic. As she waits for her father to arrive and watches her music box dancer turn slowly she thinks, "He's coming just to see me," and, "I want to be with him forever!" In the beginning the music box dancer symbolizes this fanciful ideal.

But dad hasn't come just to see her. He has business to do, and other people to see. And of course, he has to go away again. It's difficult for Rachel, but gradually she comes to realize that she and her father can still love each other even if they cannot always be together. As the story reaches its conclusion the music box dancer has been transformed into a reflection of her new maturity and thoughtfulness. Rachel understands that she is growing up into a less than perfect world.

The film has a little twist at the end. Suddenly the narration switches from Rachel to her father. We discover that he had been thinking in the same way that Rachel had: "I wish I could keep her forever..." But as they play tag in the park and Rachel constantly eludes him, his thoughts tell us that he too has come to realize that this is impossible.

The game in the park, the music box dancer, a glass gift from father to Rachel that breaks; the visual metaphors are simple and effective. Together with the narration they present an important two-way lesson that both children and parents will be able to recognize and share.

Music Box Dancer is a film that could shed some light on, and generate an understanding of a sad situation that involves so many people today.

John Brooke

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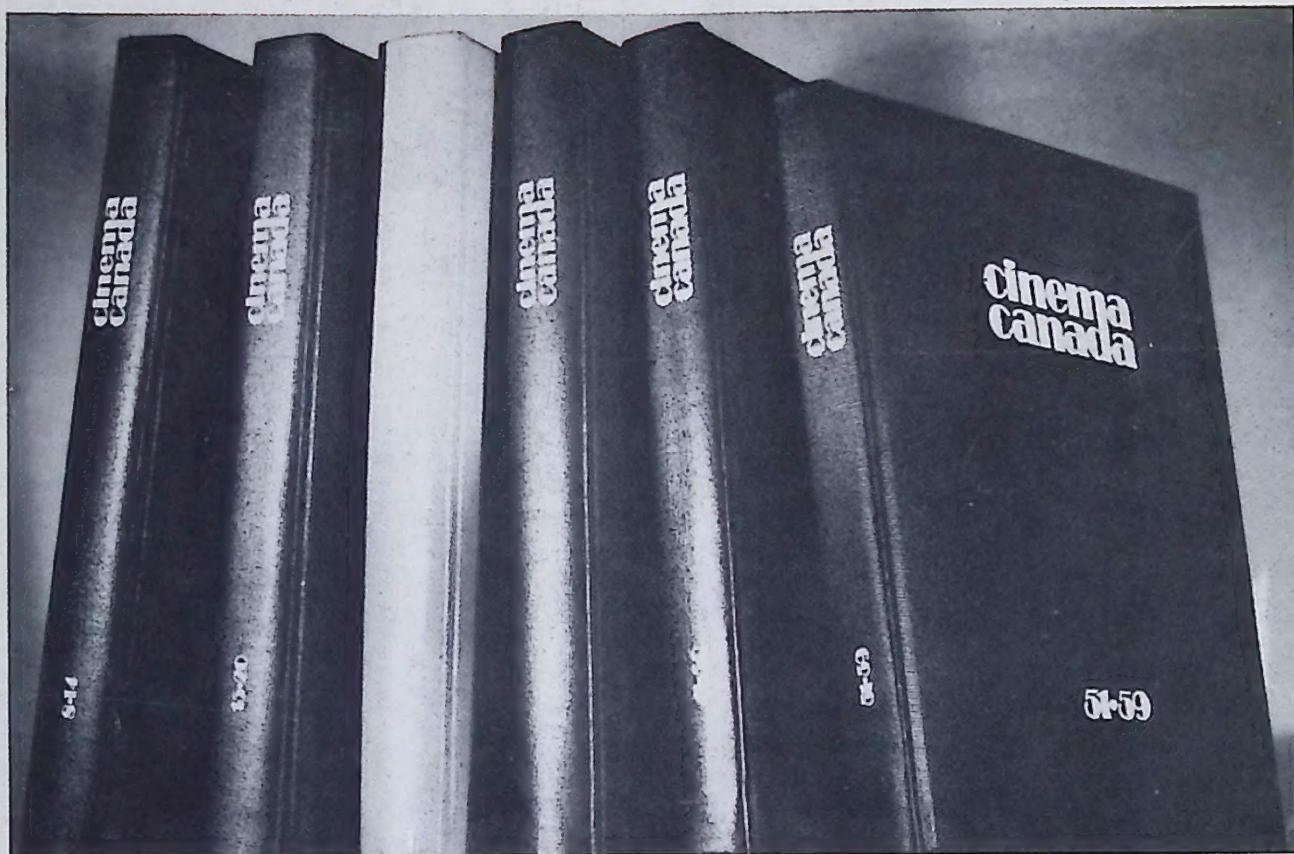
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